Tales of Adventure

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www.talesofadventure.net

This game is dedicated to everyone I have ever had the pleasure of gaming with.

Maybe now you'll understand why I asked so many oddball questions.

What a long strange trip it has been.

-JDM

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THE BASICS

On the surface the ToAd is a bit of a throwback. A game of it might seem quite familiar to anyone who was around during the early years of Role Playing Games. A bunch of friends with some time to spare get together; one person starts spinning out a story or concocts one from a pre-made adventure. The rest of the players journey through this fantasy, wielding wild imaginary characters whose powers are only held in check by dice rolls, statistics on a sheet of paper and the player's own imagination. Anything goes. There are no winners or losers. There is no correct way to play the game. There is only adventure for adventure's sake.

Beneath the surface, all is not as it was back in 1982. The ToAd is not even considered a true Role Playing Game. It is a Model Reality Kit - not a model for reality but a model of reality. While most RPGs are written to support an escape through something akin to an overwrought pencil & paper-based video game, the ToAd is more interested in studying reality rather than escaping it. Granted the ToAd does contain more fantastic elements than a wizard can shake a wand of firebolts at, but in the design of the game the question of If it was real how would it work? was given precedence over the all too common matter of how can I fit this into the game without upsetting its balance? To cover the occasional rule wreck this approach invites, the book begins with the one ubitquitous, omnipotent rule which holds the ToAd's Universe together….

WHAT SEEMS REAL IS REAL

Where rules fail, where nothing has been written, where a loop hole has been discovered that threatens to suck logic in over its event horizon and rocket it towards certain destruction – what seems real is real – steps in to fix the problem. Players are forced to think of the situation as if it had actually happened and go with the outcome that seems most real. The idea behind this is that reality is the ultimate in balanced game systems. By forcing the game to take on some semblance of the real the ToAd will hopefully balance itself.

WHAT YOU NEED

Since games like the ToAd do not normally attract people who have never played an RPG, there is a very good chance you already know what you need to play a game of the ToAd. However – just in case – here is a refresher.

PLAYERS & CHARACTERS

Players control Characters who are imaginary beings defined by a smattering of statistics on a sheet of paper. Traditionally a player only runs one character at a time, but the characters in the ToAd are simple enough that two or three can be easily run at once.

Player/Character relations can be as close as an actor to his role or as distant as chess player to her pawns. The matter is unimportant. However, considering the high mortality rate of characters in adventure games, it might be wise not to get too closely attached one character, and always keep a few in reserve.

DIRECTORS & CREATURES

Directors run adventures. They preside over everything from natural disasters to wandering monsters and distant kingdoms. Directors play neither for nor against the players. The director's goal is to keep the adventure as intriguing and interesting and entertaining as possible.

Traditionally, RPG's have only one Director or Game Master per group. **Nonsense!** While it is true that too many chefs in a dungeon can ruin a monty haul, there is no reason why a team of directors cannot work better than one – especially when a large group of players is involved. A ratio of one director for every five players is recommended.

Creatures. Creatures are characters under a director's control. Unlike other games, a creature in the ToAd is created in the same exact manner as a character. Creatures often have their statistics scaled down to the role they play, however they are true characters at heart.

An interesting flipside to this character-creature connection is that a player can craft a character out of any kind of creature in the system – even a slime, an ooze, a mold or jelly. However, it must be said that a certain heroic quality is lost when ones most prolific adventurer turns out to be a living slime (and not just by way of metaphor). If your imagination can grasp it and your director okays it, why not?

For brevity's sake, rules are often written in reference to characters, although occasionally the term creature will slip into the mix. It is best to keep in mind that characters and creatures are completely interchangeable.

DICE

For reasons which have perplexed psychologists since the mid-seventies, gamers like to squirrel together as many different kinds of dice as they can get their hands on, pack them into a purple felt Crown Royal sack and parade the load about, usually on top of six or so hard-cover books. Is it a sign of status? A cult affiliation? Sack Envy? The world may never know. The world may not want to know.

The ToAd primarily uses two ten-sided dice. Doubtlessly people will bring more. Don't try to stop them. Do not put yourself in harms way (save that for the game). Size-wise, it is recommended that you find the largest ten-siders money can buy. It is a scientifically proven fact that the more noise your dice make while rolling across the table the better your character will suffice.

To roll 1 to 100 (the ToAd's main die roll) one die must be declared the tens die and the other the ones die. Together they create a number. A 5 on the tens die and a 2 on the ones die equals 52. A 0 on both dice equals 100.

If the ten's die is not declared before a roll then automatically the die whose color comes closest to the red end of the spectrum becomes the tens die. If the roll was made with dice of the same color, size and shape – take the player's Crown Royal sack and whap said roller on the side of the head for being a dork (just kidding).

Miniatures & Graph Paper

These are not a necessity but they do help keep an adventure in perspective. The ToAd has rules for "Battleboard Combat" which requires miniatures and graph paper, but the game can be easily played without them.

For the battleboard, graph paper should be large enough to fit the base of a miniature (roughly the size of a penny) inside one square or hex. Even better are large plastic covered graph paper mats which can be drawn on with magic markers and then wiped clean. Like all of the stuff mentioned on this page, you probably won't find them at Mallwart but your local hobby shop should keep them in stock.

Other Accessories

Whether you plan to use the battleboard or not, three very smart things to carry about are grease pencils, plastic character sheet sheathes and a calculator. The grease pencils and plastic sheathes are to protect a character sheet from constant erasing. The calculator helps with the number crunching. The math in the ToAd is nothing more than the simple addition and subtraction. Most of it can be done in ones head, but when titans clash and the modifiers grow huge, it doesn't hurt to have a calculator on hand.

Beer & Pizza?

These do help until they become distracting. Generally avoid all distractions. Television sets, video games, ping-pong tables, strippers, rent-a clowns, accordian players and paintball guns all make for good for apres-game entertainment but rarely enhance the game itself.

Beer? Yes Beer! But not really. Drunkenness among players can be fatal to a game. The point is that the ToAd was made for kids, but these are the kids who fell in love with RPG's a few decades ago and have since grown up and taken on the responsibilities of being adults – most notably a shortness of time. The ToAd has one main rule book which can be read in a night. The mechanics of the game are sophisticated enough for adult tastes, yet simple and fun in a way most of today's kids are not capable of appreciating. If you bought this book thinking of giving it to your teenager as a gift, take it back and get a Gameboy. Or even better - keep it for yourself.

The ICE

One of the most interesting facets of the ToAd is the way in which it handles all of its stuff (armor, arms, equipment, spells, races, characters, etc...). As you have probably noticed, this manual is exceedingly thin for what normally passes as an RPG rule book, the reason is that all of its stuff is online at...

www.talesofadventure.net

Traditionally known as the ICE or Infernal Creation Engine, this is no ordinary website. Using it players and directors can create anything offered by the ToAd (characters, races, equipment, skills, etc...) and share their creations with the rest of the world. All the neat stuff you created as a teenager which is now collecting dust in the back of a desk drawer? Now it can be put online quite easily.

The ICE is not just about sharing creations, since 1997 the program has gone through ten different incarnations as automated spreadsheets and desktop computer programs all designed to do one thing: create more realistic characters by handling complex calculations which simply would not be feasible by hand. The last hand-made character for the ToAd was made in the early 90's and took a few hours. Now it only takes a few seconds, however it does need to be done online.

Why is the ICE Infernal? Because a program doesn't go through ten different versions by being easy to write.

AS A GAME

Playing the ToAd is not much different from playing an old fashioned RPG. In fact, it will probably be easier than you remember. Everything moves in *Rounds* which are exactly one *Moment* long. During this time the character can make one *Action*. Why are these terms italicized? They mean more than they seem.

TIME & SPACE

The ToAd runs on relative physics. Its two biggest measurements have no real world counterparts, but they help the game move quite quickly.

The Moment is the basic unit of time in the ToAd. It is roughly equal to two seconds. At base, it is just long enough for a character to make one action.

The Step is the basic unit of space in the ToAd. It is roughly one square yard (36 inches). In battleboard combat it is equal to 1 square of graph paper.

Movement is often measured in SPM or Steps Per Moment. Curiously enough, at two seconds per moment and 1 yard per step, Steps Per Moment equals Miles Per Hour. A character running at 10 SPM is actually traveling 10 MPH (Don't believe it? Do the math!). Not only is this convenient for figuring out how far one can travel over a couple of hours, it also makes movement much easier to visualize.

A Round is the one moment in which all characters and creatures have had a chance to act. Generally, a round starts with the director and moves around the game table, player to player, until all characters & creatures have had a chance to act.

Actions & Checks

An Action is one roll of the percentile dice. The dice are only rolled when a character's attempt to do something is in question. Movement is not an action since most people can move without thinking. In a situation where movement is a challenge, such as running during an earthquake, the attempt to move becomes an action and needs a roll of the dice.

A Successful Die Roll Is Equal To Or Less Than The Score Being Checked.

This is called Checking an Attribute. Abilities, preoccupations, talents, troubles, skill accessories and assertions are all checkable attributes. Typically these come with a % percent sign (Chemistry 56%) just to remind people of what they are.

Bonuses & Penalties

Once an action is deemed successful, the die roll is dubbed the action's Die Strength and modified by any bonuses or penalties brought about by the circumstances. For example, Shamrock has rolled a 34 and is using a magical weapon +10. She has opted to take an Exertion Bonus +12 and is turning this into a Charge attack +24. Unfortunately she has also sprinted that moment -40 and her opponent has decided to parry her attack -13. All of this would turn her original die roll of 34 into a 27 (34+10+12+24-40-13 = 27).

The Effects Table

The action was successful, but how well did it perform? This is decided by the Effects Table, the big colorful thing on the back of this book.

Once modified, a successful die roll is rounded off to the nearest 10 and given a column on the Effects Table. Counter to this, the force opposing the action is rounded off to fit a row on the Defensive Axis. Finally, the column and the row are traced to where they intersect. The letter at that point determines the effect of the action

> Shamrock takes her modifed die strength of 27 and rounds it off to grab the 30's column on the Effects Table. Unfortunately she is facing an opponent whose armor gives him a Total Defense of 84. Yikes! This rounds off to grab the 80's row. The two intersect over an L for a Little Effect. Shamrock looks at her character sheet to see that this does a measely 7 points of Vitality damage. If she had ran instead of sprinting into battle (-20 vs -40) this would have put her on the 50's column and resulted in a Good Effect doing 18 points of Vit damage and 1 wound. Drat!

Typically, bonuses and penalties are the direct result of the choices a player makes and what this does to ones character. Directors, more often than not, influence the action by the defense the action will face on the Effect's table. When no score is available for a defense, the director simply guesses using numbers like the ones below.

Difficulty	Easy	Cinch	Snap	Average	Heavy	Hard	Complex	Tough	Difficult	Challenging	Ball-busting
Defense	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

THE LGAITE

There are eight possible effects for every action. The six which turn up most frequently form the acronym **Lgaite**: Little, Good, Average, Intense, Terrific, and Excellent. For simple actions, such as a combat attack, the Lgaite creates a very definite outcome. As actions grow more complex so does the Lgaite until – finally – the outcome is simply left to the Director's imagination.

Apart from the six effects of the Lgaite there are two effects which are not true effects yet are just as important as the others: Failure & the Side Effect.

Failure. Failure is Failure. Either the die roll missed or an **F** resulted on the Effects Table. The character swatted an aircraft carrier with a broomstick. The opposition laughs heartily at your futile effort.

Side Effects. When an offensive and defensive score collide with equal force they do not cancel each other out but spark off in wild directions with what is known as a Side Effect.

First, the unmodified die strength is applied to the thin bar at the bottom of the Effects Table to find out what the action's effect will be. Next, something decidedly strange is tacked on to the effect to make the side effect seem decidedly strange. A safe falls out of the sky. A sword shears off at its hilt. The brave barbarian hero boldly steps on a lawn rake and knocks himself unconscious.

Sometimes an lgaite will come with its own predetermined side effect oddity. Physical & Social combat come with tables of side effects for quick reference. However none of these are guaranteed, and the director's imagination overrules them all.

EXCESS BONUSES

By now you may have noticed a small flaw in the system. The Effects Table goes up to 200, indicating that scores must be able to go over 100. But! If a score can go over 100%, how does one check it with a roll of 1 to 100? The ToAd prides itself on being a game without limits. High level characters often have scores ranging well past 100% and even 200%. Success is a given but performance is not. Enter the Excess Bonus.

An Excess Bonus is equal to a Score minus 100.

If Samurai Joe made an attack with a 143% chance of hitting. He would still roll the dice even though the hit is guaranteed. To its die strength an Excess Bonus of 43 (143 - 100 = 43) would be added. If the dice rolled a 54 then a modified die strength of 97 (54 + 43 = 97) would go to the Effects Table. The 90's column would be used instead of the 50's column. Against a defense of 84, this would result in an Average Effect instead of a Good Effect.

Excessive Excess Bonuses In the e-x-t-r-e-m-e-l-y rare case when a die strength adds up to 210 or more and literally falls off the offensive axis, the action receives an excessive excess bonus. The 20's column is used for the action. 200 is subtracted from the die strength and the remainder is applied to the opposition's defensive strength to lower its position on the effects table.

QUICK EFFECTS

If all of this seems like a bunch of mind numbing number juggling, for high level characters the Quick Effects Table is available. This sliver of a table creates exactly the same effects as the Effects Table but without all the messing about with excessive excess bonuses.

Difference	-70 and Down	-69 to -40	-39 to -20	-19 to -10	-9 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 39	40 to 69	70 and up
Effect	Failure	Little	Good	Average	Side Effect	Average	Intense	Terrific	Excellent

On the quick effects table, you modify the die strength as normal and then subtract from it the defense. Where the result lands determines the action's effect.

> Samurai Joe is faced with a Red Blaarg in a particularly fiesty mood. He draws his katana and applies a psychogenetic supercharger bonus to slice at it with a massive 255%. It's a guaranteed hit but he rolls the dice anyways to produce a 75. To this is added a 155 (255 – 100 = 155) excess bonus to create a die strength of 230. The Red Blaarg has a Total Defense of 198. Subtracted from Joe's 230 this leaves 32 points of die strength which on the Quick Effects Table results in an Intense Effect.

The benefit of the quick effects table is that its small and easy to use. The drawback is that some small amount of math will always be involved in it. With low level characters, the large effects table actually moves quicker.

GAMING EXTRAS

Up until now we've looked at items which are essential to playing a game of the ToAd. The following items are not so essential. The Average Job and Risk Rolling are completely optional. Yet they are all good to know.

SNAKE EYES

There is a principle in the ToAd which states that there is always a chance, and getting it dead to rights is not one in a million but one in a hundred. Likewise, any roll of the dice which results in 100 is known as rolling snake-eyes (on two ten-siders this is two zeros, which look a bit like eyes). Irregardless of the score being checked, this roll always hits, and it does so with a die strength of **100**; hence its other nickname: sudden death.

THE AVERAGE JOB

Risk is not always a factor in everything one does. The dice do not always need to be rolled. Characters have the option of doing "An Average Job" of it and settling for a die strength equal to half the checked score. All bonuses and penalties apply but at half strength.

If a character with a Research success score of 80 declares that he is doing an Average Job of it and throws in a +10 Concentration Bonus to boot (creating a success score of 90, but costing 5 Fort). He automatically produces a die strength of 45 without ever lifting a ten-sider. Doing an Average Job doesn't exactly make for an exciting game, but it does guarantee some kind of success.

RISK ROLLING

Risk rolling is similar to the Average Job, yet considerably more compelling. A character starts with half of the action's Success Score (its Starting Point) and begins rolling dice – any dice of any size, shape, denomination, material, color, sparkly things caught in the plastic, or sparkly free, etc... These rolls are totaled up and when the player decides to stop, the rolls are either added to or subtracted from the starting point to become the action's die strength. If successful, bonuses and penalties are added as usual.

Of course, there are a few catches....

- You must tell the game you are risk rolling by saying **"Risk Roll"** aloud - before the first die is rolled.

- You may only make **five throws** of the dice, although any number of dice may be rolled in one throw.

- In the end: an **Odd total adds** to the starting point, an **Even total subtracts** from it. (think Odd is Good & Even is Evil.)

- If the resulting die strength is **less than or equal to the score** being checked and **greater than zero** it is a success.

> Gnarl the Conqueror decides to risk roll with an 87% BCH. This score is reduced to 44 (rounded off) for its starting point. He says "Risk Roll" to the game table and picks up two twelve-siders. He rolls 7 & 8 on his first throw, 9 & 3 on his second roll, and 5 & 9 on his third throw. The total is 40. Forty is an even number, meaning that if he stops now the penalty will drop Gnarl's die strength down to a miserable 4 (44 - 40 = 4). Gnarl curses himself for not stopping after the second throw which would have resulted in a +27 and a decent die strength of 71. The director reminds Gnarl that he still has 4 points left before failing by default and tosses a four sider across the table. Gnarl rubs the dust from the little-used die, kisses it, shakes it, and rolls.... a 3! The day is saved! With a total action strength of 87 (44 + 43 = 87), he stands to create an terrific effect against his enemies defense of 45 instead of a little effect!

The idea behind risk rolling is that most of us know what we are capable of – just so long as we don't start taking foolish risks that may land us well ahead or behind the average job we tend to do. Olympians are known for going before the judges and doing what seems to them like a normal day of practice, with no risks taken whatsoever, largely because there is so much at stake they cannot afford to take risks. In a sense, risk rolling is actually more realistic than the standard action check. Unfortunately, it also takes longer to do and would slow the game to a trudging crawl if every rock slinging Kobold had to risk roll an attack. Therefore, it is often considered a character-only option (unless, of course, the creature happens to be one of great importance).

All in all, risk-rolling is fun. It puts a player more in tune with the risks a character is taking, and gives the player more control over the outcome of an action than a simple roll of the dice. Risk rolling is all about pushing ones luck and sweating the consequences, about making the decision to stay or go. It also provides a use for the legendary hordes of dice gamers are known to haul around to gaming tables. It even provides a place for the often overlooked yet irreplaceable four-sider.

REACTION CHECKS

Reaction Checks are very rare. This is the checking of an attribute in response to some other characters action, such as checking ones reflexes when hit by a trip attack to remain standing. It requires a roll of the dice but it does not rob a character of their action for that moment.

To Hit Modifiers

Astute gamers may have noticed that the ToAd has nothing but what are known as damage modifiers, bonuses and penalties which influence how an action performs. Nothing is there to help the dice roll up a successful action. Correct! How astute of you! This is done to keep the game fast moving. No time is wasted modifying scores that may result in failure. It is not very realistic, but in the rare instance where one is caught with dozens of characters and creatures to wrangle, it becomes a god-send to simply pick a score, roll the dice and skip it if missed. However. Isn't this supposed to be a Model Reality Kit? Prizing what is real over what makes for a good game?

Yes it is. And one of the neat things about the ToAd's bevy of bonuses and penalties is that they can be applied to either the score being checked or the resulting die strength with equal effect. So if a slacker picks up a +20 magic sword but only has a 32% chance to hit with it, he can add that +20 to the 32% to create a success score of 52%. Of course, if successful, that +20 may not be added to the die strength to create a better effect – the bonus has already been spent. A trade has been made. The matter of performing well has been traded for the ability to hit.

Multiple Actions

Having only one action per round may seem a bit off-putting for advanced players, especially for six armed Hindu Goddesses accustomed to hopping about like a skink on a sugar fit with a nasty case of ADD (we're talking players here, not characters). Also it makes sense that a character with a skill score of 301% should be able to use act more than once every two seconds. Through Multiple Actions a character can. A Multiple Actions is the quick repetition of a single action. If an action can be realistically performed more than once per moment it can be used to make multiple actions. Researching in the library? No. Jumping over an alligator pit? No. Attacking with a sword in combat? Of course. To make multiple actions a character simply splits the score into what is needed.

> Samurai Joe has a 145% chance to hit with his sword attack, this is a massive blow against any one opponent. Unfortunately, today he is faced with three enemies attacking all at once! Knowing he won't last long attacking them one at a time, he decides to make multiple actions. He splits his 145% into three different slices - 35%, 50%, and 60% - one for each attacker. The dice are rolled three different times, but technically only one action has been committed.

There are no penalties or bonuses involved with making multiple actions. However, it should be noted that penalties and bonuses need to be figured out and then split evenly between all actions.

> After an action which hit only once with the 60% multiple attack, Joe decides to make just two multiple attacks this round: one at 110% and the other at 35%. The director eyes him curiously, "You know that the excess bonus on that 110% will be split evenly between both attacks. There's really no reason to have it."
> Joe changes his scores to 100% and 45%. He rolls a 56 and an 11. His katana is a +15 weapon and he took a +17 Exertion bonus. Added together and split evenly they provide each roll with a +16 bonus. If he had listened to his gut and gone with 110% and 35% he would have added in a +10 Excess bonus which would have raised each bonus by 5 points to +21. Next time, Joe resolves to follow his instincts.

The main catch is the matter of realism. Not every weapon is going to be able to make multiple attacks. Unless charging a pack of orcs who are standing all in a row, the lance of a knight on horseback cannot make multiple attacks; likewise, neither can a crossbow or a musket.

Remember, what seems real is real!

SIMULTANEOUS ACTIONS

Simultaneous actions do come very close to breaking the rule of only one action per round. The idea is that when two different actions seem to come from the same mindset, they may be used simultaneously – which takes us back to combat, go figure. Use of a dagger and a sword at the same time is considered a simultaneous action. Use of gymnastics and the martial arts is another. Use of accounting and a sword at the same time is not a simultaneous action. Use of accounting and research is a simultaneous action, but not one worth the penalties involved unless working under a severe deadline.

A sword and a shield may be used at the same time without penalty because the dice do not need to be rolled to make the shield work. Now slicing an opponent with a sword and then thwaping him with ones shield for more damage would count as simultaneous actions.

The catch to this is a -15 Stacking Penalty for each additional simultaneous action – taken by all the actions. Attacking with a sword and dagger would cause both to take a -15 penalty. Adding a kick to the sword and dagger would cause all three actions (sword, dagger, kick) to take a -30 penalty. Adding a head butt and a shield thwap would cause each of the five actions (sword, dagger, kick, head butt, shield thwap) to take a -60 penalty.

simultaneous actions	1st check	2nd check	3rd check	4th check	5th check
2 actions	-15	-15			
3 actions	-30	-30	-30		
4 actions	-45	-45	-45	-45	
5 actions	-60	-60	-60	-60	-60

This can go on for as long as a character has success scores to take penalties to. If the character's dagger score is his weakest at 65%, the character must stop at -60 and cannot tack on another simlutaneous action. Speed-wise, all simultaneous actions use the speed of the slowest action.

SO HOW DO I ADVENTURE?

This is the great thing about RPGs. The game is not confined to a board. Anything you can do in reality your character can do in the fantasy – and then some. Of course, the game world will doubtlessly provide an equal and opposite reaction to everything your character does but at least you won't have to run around the house to similate your character being pursued by a tribe of angry hobgoblins. You simply roll the dice.

On a technical level, an adventure is a long chain of actions, checks and effects made to conquer whatever a director has to shovel out. It is also one of the great unifying principles of the ToAd. No matter how many details get stirred into the mix, the game always filters down to a basic pattern of…

<p style="text-align:center;">Round Begins.
Action - Check – Effect.
Round Ends.</p>

CHARACTERS

While the game may play like older RPG's much has changed from the days of fighters named Bob1 (Bob2, Bob3, etc….) who were little more than pack mules for magic items. Everything about a character is interconnected. A change in an ability score sends quakes of change through a character's design, modifying everything from wound counts to movement speeds to success scores and initiative modifiers. The level of a character is not just a rank of greatness but a controlling principle of how the character is made. Abilities are chosen not randomly rolled up. Ultimately nothing is left to chance – not with characters who hope to last more than a few rounds.

Character Creation is an Adventure in Itself.

Of course, as stated in the section on the ICE, character creation is not an adventure played on the game table. The idea is that players go online to build their characters at www.talesofadventure.net, and then play with the print outs at the game table. The ToAd's characters simply cannot be made by hand. Likewise, this section of the book does not contain the nitty-gritty of building a character using the ICE, but it will tell you about the different parts of a character

For the purpose of creation, a character is the sum total of six main parts

> Intensity

> Identity

> Abilities

> Preoccupations

> Talents & Troubles

> Details

RASBERRY ROANE
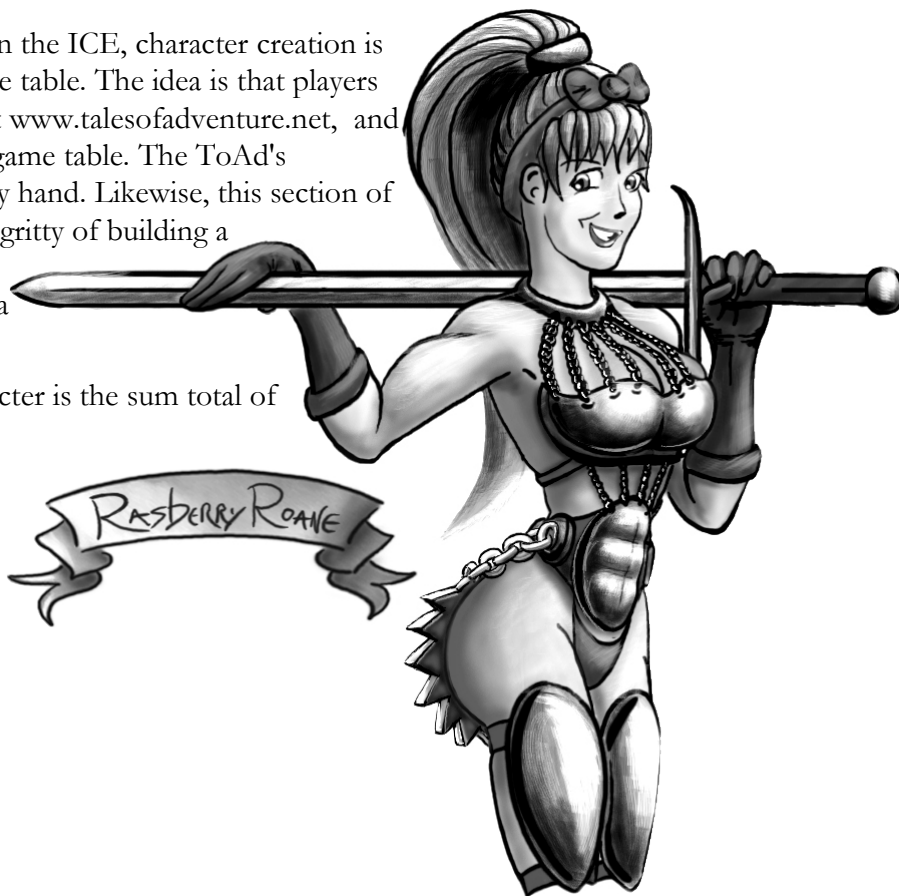
INTENSITY

Experience guides a character's development but Effort is what makes it happen. The amount of effort a character puts into this self-development is controlled by the character's Intensity Level. This provides the character with a number of Effort Points – or ePs – to spend on things like abilities, preoccupations, talents, etc. A change in intensity does stand to create a more powerful character, but only if the player behind the character knows what the world expects and can spend those ePs wisely.

Intensity Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Eps Granted	410	840	1290	1760	2250	2760	3290	3840	4410	5000

Although the sample above stops at level 10, there is no upwards limit to intensity levels. An algorithm inside the ICE will supply the right amount of ePs for a 100th level character as well as a 1000th level character. Of course, such titanic world-crushing characters will have so much power they will be considered useless, however it is comforting to know it can be done.

Starting Characters.

Unlike other games, new characters do not start at level 1. In most adventures (aside from those concerned with breaking into cookie jars) such a tactic would be suicidal considering how little a low level character has to work with. Instead, new characters should be built to fit whatever level is recommended for a planned adventure. Such new characters may not have accumulated the stuff of a more accomplished character but the ToAd has always been more about who a character is rather than what he or she carries.

For all intensive purposes, the average Joe on the street tends to be a 5th level character. The idea of a 0-level Commoner is preposterous. If still unsure what level to build your character at, ask your director.

IDENTITY

While attributes are identity defining characteristics by nature, what is meant by Identity are those singular features which have a global impact on the rest of character creation – namely Phyla, Race & Sex and Calling.

Phyla

The ICE has the potential to support thousands of different races & sexes. Phyla keeps them organized. If you are looking to build a Humanoid character then phyla is used by the ICE to keep a player from having to search through all the Echinoderms to find the right humanoid race. It is not a true phyla in the biological sense, but the idea is the same. Otherwise, Phyla adds nothing to a character.

Race & Sex

Unlike other games, a character's race and sex does not make itself known by capping the abilities or imposing level limitations. Instead, race works in the background by influencing formulas and adjusting the costs of various attributes, most notably the abilities.

Propensity. Consider this. Human men tend to be stronger than human women. This has nothing to do with skipping gym class. Thanks to their bodily design, men simply do not need to exert as much effort to achieve the same amount of muscle mass as women do; therefore they tend to have more muscle. Men are said to have a greater propensity for muscle. There are many women in the world who are considerably stronger than the average man, but they are only muscular because they have worked at it. They have put a huge slice of effort into their muscle score, moreso than a man of the same strength. This is how Race & Sex influences the purchasing of abilities.

The different races also bring access to rare talents and troubles, but only if the character chooses to develop them. Little ever comes without some expenditure of effort.

Callings

A Calling is just what it sounds like, it is what the character feels called to do in life: Priest, Politician, Villain, Knight, Thief, etc.... Gamewise, a calling is little more than a shopping list of preoccupations, talents and troubles designed to cut the character closer to the mold of the calling. A character does not need to purchase everything a calling recommends to adhere to that calling! For the most part, a character simply announces to the world that they are what they are and the world believes them until proven otherwise.

Inside an adventure, so far as joining a calling is concerned, callings are social things presided over by those who have followed it in the character's immediate area. Depending on an adventure's story line a character may not always be welcomed to join a calling. For example, Samurai Joe may be the best damn fighter on the island and a self-made Samurai, but since the other Samurai's would much rather slay goblins than accept one into their ranks Joe is not considered to be a true Samurai and stiffed on the social advantages of the title.

ABILITIES

The abilities are the ten attributes every character and creature will have, even if the ability score is seemingly zero or in the negatives. When combined in different formulas the abilities create a character's wound count, regeneration rates, preoccupational success scores, movement speed, and nearly everything that comes natural to living. The importance of the abilities cannot not be underestimated.

The Universal Average Score is 50.. It is equal to a 10 in that other game, likewise 5 points of Toad score = 1 point. A score of 100 would roughly equal an 18/00 (whatever that might mean). In the ToAd there is no upper limit to the ability score a character can have, but before breaking the effort point bank take heed that the cost of a score increases in proportion to its size and propensity, often making a humongous score literally not worth the effort.

THE MENTAL ABILITIES

Fortitude (Fort or F) concentrates, disciplines and fuels the processes of the mind. Characters with little Fortitude often forget what they are saying mid-sentence. Characters with great Fortitude enjoy finishing other people's sentences for them.

Knowledge (Know or K) is about how a mind picks up, stores and retrieves information. Characters with little knowledge often ask questions like what is lettuce? 4 or 5 times a day. Characters with great knowledge often answer everything in the form of a question.

Charisma (Char or C) is the ability to use language, imagination and situation to persuade other people into doing their bidding. Characters with great charisma are born leaders, fearsome salesmen and the seducers of nations. A character with little charisma couldn't point out a tidal wave with a shotgun and a megaphone.

Intuition (Intu or I) is the ability to be aware of ones surroundings and use this information to make quick accurate guesses about where a situation is heading. A character with little Intuition often confuses the ringing of a phone on TV with one in the next room. A character with great Intuition answers the phone before it rings, and knows who is on the other end of the line.

Stability (Stab or S) is Durability for the mind. Characters with great Stability might take the sight world-wide destruction as just another day in the park. Characters with little Stability freak out at the chirp of a cricket.

THE PHYSICAL ABILITIES

Vitality (Vit or V) is a character's physical energy, pure and simple. A character with great Vitality can seem almost hyperspastic with motion, never stopping to eat, think or sleep as they zip through the day. A character with little Vitality might pass out from the fatigue of clipping a fingernail.

Muscle (Mus or M) is the brute ability to move heavy masses through space. At the beach, a character with little Muscle usually gets sand kicked in his face and dubbed "wussy!" by someone with an abundance of Muscle.

Physique (Phy or P) is a combination of health and fitness. A character with little Physique may have a strangely proportioned body, endless medical bills and a life of lackluster misery because of it. A character with great Physique may have a statuesque body, an endless flow of inescapable adoration and a life of lackluster misery because of it.

Reflexes (Ref or R) covers both hand-eye coordination as well as timing and agility. Characters with great reflexes tend to make good gymnasts, street mimes and Japanese steak house chefs (but not all three at once!). Characters with little reflexes are rare since they tend to get run over by steamrollers, glaciers, and the occassional three toed sloth.

Durability (Dur or D) is Stability for the body. A character with great Durability might bounce harmlessly after falling out of a plane. A character with little Durability might turn into a big purple bruise after bouncing on a waterbed.

The Parent Abilities

Fortitude and Vitality are known as Parent Abilities because they parent a character's Current Fort and Current Vit. The Current Fort & Vit scores fluctuate as a character takes damage, exerts energy, rests and regenerates. If either current ability drops to zero the character will fall unconscious and not wake up until at least half of the original score has been regenerated.

Luckily, Current Fort & Vit are easily regenerated. A character declares rest and does nothing. Every minute of rest repairs both Current Fort & Vit by the amount listed as the character's regeneration rate. Of course a character cannot regenerate more points than he or she has in the parent ability, hence the reason why the two are kept separate on a character sheet.

Character Mortality

Characters in the ToAd need to worry about both their bodies and their minds and the two very different types of damage which can occur to them: Wear & Tear.

Wear Damage is represented by fluctations in the Current Fort & Vit as described above. This is exhaustion, over-exerting oneself, and trying to hold against the forces of a brutal world. It is both easily lost and easily regained.

Tear Damage is tracked by way of Mental & Physical wounds. Tear damage is actual destruction and very hard to repair, averaging about 1 wound per night of sleep depending on a character's regenerative abilities.

Unconsciousness & Death. Unconsciousness occurs when a current ability drops to zero. Death occurs when a wound count drops to zero and its matching current ability causes the character to fall unconscious, meaning either Current Fort & Mental Wounds –or– Current Vit & Physical Wounds have been struck to zilch.

Bleeding. As painful as it might be, losing all of ones wound count does not equal unconsciousness. A character can suffer up to half his original wound count in the negatives before becoming too damaged to act (ex: falling into a volcano). However, dropping below zero wounds causes the body to quickly bleed out current ability at a rate equal to **10 points per missing wound**. If a character is down –5 physical wounds, he or she will bleed away 50 points of Vitality per moment until dead.

Mental Death. Admittedly, death on the mental front is not like death on the physical front. This is more like a severe mental breakdown where unconsciousness is a chronic inability to think (even for simple things such as movement) and loss of wounds is like having ones sanity pureed by mental conflict. Whether all of this adds up to actual death or just an affliction which can be cured by way of quiet time spent in a padded room with a sleeveless jacket is up to ones director.

Death can be cheated but only through the use of various talents and skills. Check out Lucky Misses and Calculated Misses to increase ones wound count or the talent Cat Lives to skirt the grim reaper all together.

PREOCCUPATIONS

Throughout the course of a life many skills are learned and forgotten, yet there are always a few the character will keep and perfect upon until to the very end. These are the character's preoccupations. A skill remains a skill until it is picked up by a character and then it becomes a preoccupation. Otherwise there is no difference between a skill and a preoccupation. The terms are interchangeable.

A preoccupation has five main parts: name, formula, skill bonus, cost, and description.

Name. The name of a preoccupation tells the jist of what it concerns. It should be descriptive enough to stand on its own without any need to hit the website.

Formula. This manipulates a character's abilities to produce the preoccupation's Skill Score, for example, Heavy Swords & Clubs – 65%. It is the character's natural ability at performing the skill.

Each letter in a formula stands for a separate ability that is added together and then divided by the number on its end. KIDS5 is shorthand for (Knowledge + Intuition + Durability + Stability) / 5. A **T** in a formula stands for the character's intensity level x 10.

When picking preoccupations, the formula is a very good thing to keep in mind. Heavy Swords & Clubs has a formula of VMMMRK7 so it might not be the best choice for a character with toothpick biceps.

Skill Bonus. Skill bonus is the primary reason to purchase a skill. It is the sum total of practice and training, the character's perfection of that skill. In play the Skill Score and Skill Bonus combine to become the preoccupation's Success Score. The two are never separated for anything but character creation purposes.

Cost is the amount of ePs needed to turn a skill into a preoccupation. Cost also effects the price of buying a Skill Bonus for the preoccupation. Simply put: the more expensive a skill is to acquire the harder & more expensive it will be to perfect. Fishing is easier to perfect than Brain Surgery.

Description. What does a skill do? It does whatever the player wants it to do and whatever a director will allow it to do. Biology, Photography and Wilderness Survival are so endless in their applications that writing them down in the typical style of other games seems pointless. Therefore, many skills have little description beyond their names. Those skills that have a description often do so to point out special attributes, such as the way the Shields skill can be used to improve ones defense.

Skill Schools & Accessories

Some skills are more than just skills. They are gateways to learning sub-skills which cannot be learned by themselves. These are Skill Schools, and what they teach are called Skill Accessories. Magic Casting and the Martial Arts are prime examples. The spell Firebolt is a skill accessory. The magic casting system Buaggabuagga is a skill school. Firebolt cannot be learned without first learning the basics of a school which teaches it, such as Buaggabuagga. Skill accessories take their success scores directly from the skill school, modifying it to show the skill accessories difficulty. Skill accessories themselves cannot be given skill bonuses, but to increase the skill bonus of the skill school will cause all success scores to go up by an equal amount.

KNOWLEDGE LIMITATIONS

A character's preoccupations, skill bonuses, and skill accessories justify a character's knowledge score. Because of this, the knowledge score has a profound effect on how many ePs may be invested in these areas.

Preoccupations: a character must spend at least 3 times the Knowledge score but no more than 12 times the Knowledge score on acquiring preoccupations.

Skill Bonuses: a character may not spend more than 10 times ones Knowledge score on skill bonuses.

Skill Accessories: a character may not spend more than 8 times ones Knowledge score on skill accessories.

While it is good to be aware of these limitations, there is no reason to break out the calculator and fret over them. The ICE will tell you when they have been broken.

TALENTS & TROUBLES

Talents & Troubles are preoccupations from the twilight zone. Unlike preoccupations, they are very definite in doing what they do and are not effected by changes in the abilities. Occassionally they are checked as attributes, but more often than not, they supply a die strength modifer of some sort.

Talents and Troubles cannot take a skill bonus. The selection of Talents and Troubles a character has to choose from is supplied by either the character's race with Biological Talents, or by what is simply out there and available to everyone with Universal Talents.

DETAILS

Details are purchased through the abilities. While the formulas of the details are listed here as a reference, they are handled during character creation by the ICE and never come up during a game.

CONCENTRATION

Concentration is a bonus a character can use at any time for any action that may be bettered by concentration (Research – yes, Swords & Clubs – no). The catch is that concentration burns 5 points of Current Fort per use.

Formula: (Fort + Know + Intu + Char + Stab + (Character Intensity Level x 10)) / 30.

EXERTION

Exertion is Concentration for physical tasks (Research – no, Swords & Clubs – yes). It exhausts 5 points of Current Vit per use.

Formula: (Vit + Mus + Phy + Ref + Dur + (Character Intensity Level x 10)) / 30.

MINT

Mental Initiative Modifier. This is the speed of a character's mind. It is used in encounters where a character needs to know who can think first.

Formula: (Know + Intu) / 50.

PINT

Physical Initiative Modifier. This is the speed of a character's body. A common use of this is in combat to see who strikes first.

Formula: (Ref + Intu) / 50.

RDF

The Reflexive Defensive Factor is flinching, pure and simple. It is the body's split second subconscious attempt to move vital areas out of harms way. Gamewise it works like armor and can enhance armor but only as much as the armor allows. The stiffer and bulkier a suit of armor happens to be, the more it will dampen the RDF's ability to defend.

Formula: Ref / 3.

SIZE INDEX

The Size Index is best thought of as In Relation to Man-Sized – where Man-Sized is 1.0 (100%), or approximately 72 inches tall and 200lbs in weight (although it is important to keep in mind that the size index refers to overall Mass, not just height and weight).

Drop a character's size index down to .50 (50%) and the human character is suddenly a halfling. Increase it to 3.0 (300%) and the character becomes something like an ogre. With size fluctuations comes many potent changes ranging from movement to the weight of equipment and the amount of damage one does.

Virtual Vitality represents the effect of increasing a character's size on his or her ability to take Wear damage. Think of it this way: a generic 1.0 man-sized creature hits a halfling with a club doing 2 wounds and 50 points of Vit damage. Fine and dandy. Now he hits a Ogre twice his own size. The size difference alone makes the attack seem much more like a ruler snap than a decent clubbing, but our lazy ogre has only 45 Vitality points. Does he fall unconscious from the blow? No. Thanks to Virtual Vitality his size gives him 90 Vit points to hold against the blow (200% of 45) leaving him simply staggered.

Now if our ogre were to climb on an exercise bike and try to ride it for half an hour then he would have to make an ability check verses his actual Vitality of 45 to complete the task.

On a character sheet, Virtual Vit takes the place of Current Vit.

Virtual Muscle. An increase in size also means an increase in Muscle, similar in manner to Virtual Vitality – except that it actually replaces the Muscle ability on ones character sheet. Because muscle is only as good as a creature's coordination of it, virtual muscle is not factored into the formulas of ones preoccupations. Because of this, in matters of raw power, it might actually be wiser to wrestle an ogre than to arm wrestle one. Large creatures do massive damage, but like swatting flies, if you are lucky they won't hit you that often.

Size And Lgaite. Probably the most controversial effect of character size is the effect it has on the damage done by weapons, claws & jaw attacks and the martial arts. Basically, size multiplies the standard lgaite entry (the damage done at Size Index 1) by the character's Size Index. This is done with the idea that if a sword is built for a character 4.5 times the size of the average man, it will probably do 4.5 times the damage of a normal sword. This even applies to firearms. A .38 caliber revolver in the hands of an ogre is considered 3 times the size of what we know a revolver to be (a 1.44 caliber hand howitzer?). Of course, weapons do not instantly resize in a character's hands, but when you build a character using the ICE, the resizing happens automatically, as if the character somehow had the weapon made to its size.

It should also be noted that a slight tapering has been added in to keep larger creatures from producing ridiculously over powered attacks. The first attempt to build a dragon came up with a creature whose claws did 2,468 points of damage with an average effect. Yowsa!

Changing One's Size: Typically a character's Size-Index is set when Race & Sex is chosen. It can be left untouched to create a character of perfectly average build, or it can be modified to shorten or enlarge the character. The ICE does allow players to increase or decrease this size, but because of the power of size change some moderation is warrented, otherwise an unhappy director might result.

Before fixating on giant-sized characters, keep in mind that hauling around the extra bulk of ones body will cost the character ePs at a rate which is close to 1 effort point per pound. This factor also tapers off as a character grows larger. Size is costly no matter how big one is.

WEIGHT

Naked weight is not guessed at. Weight is determined by the character's Size Index along with a combination of these four factors.

- ☽ **Skeletal Weight**, the weight of the character's skeleton and internal organs.
- ☽ **Muscle Weight** the character's muscle score multiplied by its racial pounds per muscle point score.
- ☽ **Fat Weight.** A Physique of less than 60 will cause a character to become abnormally overweight or underweight.
- ☽ **Natural Armor Weight.** Some races supply their bearers with natural armor such as a shell or carapace. The weight of this armor is determined by the natural armor in relation to the size of the character.

Of course, none of this size wrangling is handled during the game and the ICE controls it during character creation/evolution. Weight does matter in the course of a game. There are a number of wrestling moves which use its score on the defense. Generally though, you will probably never have to roll the dice to check your weight, we have scales for that (yuk! yuk! yuk!).

MAX LIFT

Max Lift is how much a character can lift in pounds before having to make a Muscle check.

Formula: Muscle x 3.

ENCUMBERMENT

Encumberment describes how the weight of what one is carrying effects movement. Encumberment has 5 levels: Moving, Packing, Lugging, Trudging, and Straining; the allowed weight of which is defined by the character's Max Lift:

Encumberment Level	Moving	Packing	Lugging	Trudging	Straining
Max Weight per Level	10% Max Lift	30% Max Lift	50% Max Lift	70% Max Lift	90% Max Lift

Movement itself is determined by the character's choice of race and sex and then modified by the size of the characters physical abilities.

DESCRIPTION

The character's description can be anything, from a short biography to a verbal description to the character as he or she might be introduced on a game show. Thrudge the Barbarian hails from the frozen north where he enjoys hacking the heads off of orcs and stuffing them down the throats of trolls. Although currently involved in a vision quest to destroy the wizard Mordorat this has not stopped him from pursuing his true passion for chain mail macrame'. Let give it up for Thrudge!!!!

IN A NUTSHELL

This is space for the designer's notes. It's free flow for anything the player might want to point out about the character, its construction, or hints about use.

ZODIAC SIGN

Like real zodiac signs, a character's astrological sign only means as much as the player brings to it.

INCLINATION

Inclination describes the way a character is inclined to act in any given situation. Unlike other games, it does not guarantee the way a character will act. It simply hints at what might happen. Inclination comes in nine flavors made up of two parts. First is a statement of social desire. Second is a degree of selfishness.

Peaceful Good	Neutral Good	Violent Good
Peaceful Neutral	Neutral, True	Violent Neutral
Peaceful Evil	Neutral Evil	Violent Evil

Peaceful and Violent are almost interchangeable with Lawful and Chaotic. Peaceful characters do not like to have the fair balance of their world upset. They are more inclined to follow laws than other characters but not if these laws are unfair or cause more turmoil than peace. Violent characters favor change and revolution. They may see opportunity in the breakdown caused by chaos, but this does not necessarily mean that they are chaotic or out of control.

Good, Neutral & Evil are fairly self explanatory. Some would argue that there is nothing but good, that a creature is helpless to do anything except try to bring its existence to a better – more good – state. If so, then these three terms should be taken as the scope of ones self. Extremely evil characters have a narrow scope of self, often stopping at the edge of their skin and not caring about anything beyond it. Extremely good characters have a very wide scope of self, often stopping at the edge of what they know yet welcoming what lies beyond. Neutrals sit somewhere inbetween.

All three are shackled by sympathy to avoid hurting what they consider to be their self. So while evil may promise greater freedom from domineering cultures, goodness promises greater power through the unity it inspires.

Social vs. Personal. Characters come with two inclinations, a personal view of oneself and the view taken by their immediate society. Social and Personal Inclinations do not always match and it is not rare for someone to have completely conflicted inclinations (Violent Evil on the outside and Peaceful Good on the inside).

Just as one can change societies or a view of oneself, inclination can also be changed without anything except storyline ramifications. Like trouncing an addiction, moving towns, or pulling a tooth with a pair of pliars – it isn't always pleasant or easy, but it isn't impossible either.

Inclination & the ToAd's Universe: While Good and Evil may have universal merit there is no heavenly (or hellish) divide among the inclinations. There might be other-worldly country-clubs into which only the holders of a certain inclination may enter, but such places are established and maintained by its inhabitants and few are in any way divine; especially since inclination is so easily and honestly changed.

While it is true that creatures of a similar inclination tend to gravitate towards one another; in the battle between what a situation demands and what a character desires, the situation often determines a character's affiliations in spite of desire. Peaceful Good politicians may be bitter enemies since the world of politics has put them running against one another. Meanwhile, teenage lovers may actually seek out diametrically opposed significant others (talk about a french-kissed mouthful!) since they feel a need for each other's differences to make a balanced couple.

GAMEWISE

Gamewise is not a detail. It is a concept. It pops up everywhere, but most noticably on the end of ones character sheet. It is a short no-nonsense blurb describing how a highly defined attribute (skill, talent, trouble, spell, equipment, etc.) can be used in the game. It is on the end of ones character sheet to keep players from wasting time in the consultation of one rule or another.

GAME WORLDS

The ToAd is a universal gaming system. Literally! It represents one universe wherein a number of different game worlds reside – at different points of time and space, but all under the same roof and operating by the same rules. The best way to understand the mechanics of a game worlds is to see it as a giant filter laid over one very large game known simply as the ToAd. By itself, the ToAd is almost unplayable because it offers too much stuff, but through a game world it narrows down its selection and thereby gives the world a distinctive touch all its own.

Characters are generally made for one game world or another, yet they are not trapped in these worlds and can be easily used in the other worlds to create "cross-platform" adventures (now, modifying the storyline to

get them there – that is not so easy). Characters crossing between worlds take all their stuff with them – even if it has been filtered out of the new world one is entering. However, once in that world, they will be limited by what that world has to offer. Lose the mythical Ice Staff of Tharticus and there is no running down to Mallwart to buy a new one.

CHARACTER EVOLUTION

When characters change intensity levels, typically in between adventures, they go through a period of metamorphosis where effort points can be juggled about and spent on new attributes or necessary improvements.

Traditionally, a character can only spend the amount of ePs between the last level and the new one, but since there is no way to track this and frankly – no one really cares – players should feel free to change their character in any way they want, just so long as the change isn't glaringly drastic. Getting rid of a long held preoccupation and spending its effort on something new is fine. Changing a character's Race & Sex from a male Thoggit to a female Elf is going to raise more than a few eyebrows and demand a very interesting back story.

The most important thing to remember about character evolution is that these changes result from a long period of private study & practice, hence in between adventures. A character spelunking through the cave tombs of Atok the Reptile God does not just suddenly wake up one morning to find 60 extra points of muscle rippling around his body – not unless they belong to a hungry anaconda.

ADVENTURE 101

An adventure is a series of actions. No matter what the action happens to be: deriddling a sphinx, delousing a sphinx, carving a picture of Elvis on the head of a pin or carving a picture of Elvis on the head of an orc – the ToAd follows one basic pattern:

1.) Approach the situation with an attribute and an idea of how it can be used to overcome the problem.	**Player:** "Hmm. I'm going talk around the tavern and see if I can't find anything out about the old castle from the townsfolk."
	Director: "Nobody wants to talk about it."
	Player: "I use my Insult skill to see if I can't bully them into spilling the beans."
2.) Run this by the director who will assign to it a defense strength.	**Director:** "Insult? That doesn't seem like something that would work with this rough hewn crowd. I'd give it a Defense of 80 with a strong possibility of being thrown through a window."
3.) Concoct a new approach if the defense strength seems impossibly high. Declare any modifiers one will take if successful. Things like Concentration and Exertion, must be declared before the dice are rolled.	**Player:** "Okay, maybe I'll just try my natural Charisma." **Director:** "Defense 40" **Player:** "I'll take a concentration bonus." **Director:** "Alright. Burn 5 fort for it."
4.) Roll the Dice, hoping to roll equal to or under the success score.	**Player:** "Yeah! 32."
5.) If successful, modify the die strength and take it to the Effects Table.	**Player:** "Wait a minute. Damn. 32 plus 7 still leaves me on the 3 column." **Director:** "Against 40, its an Average effect."
6.) Put the Effect into action. If no lgaite exists, ask the director for an on the spot interpretation of what just happened.	**Director:** "The towns folk haven't exactly warmed to you yet, but an old geezer at the bar smiles a toothless grin and starts rambling on about monsters off in the hills...."

I will not partake in your silly little games!

Earl Gray Ooze

BREAKING THINGS

The Easy Way. The easiest way to handle the quaking, ever-present urge to break things is to assign a Vitality score and a Defense to the breakable object and then let the characters hack away at them.

Vitality is used instead of the obvious choice of physical wounds because of the way in which weapons do their damage. A dagger may do more wound damage than a clawed hammer, but only against fleshy creatures. Against a raging army of Ming Vases the clawed hammer is a much better choice.

The Real Way. A slower but more realistic way of handling breakage is to provide the breakable with a wound count and readjust the Wear/Tear ratios to fit the construction of the thing being broken (see Physical Combat for more on Wear & Tear damage). Below is a table showing how many points of wear damage it takes to score a wound against an item of non-fleshy construction.

Damage Type	Fragile or crystaline.	Brittle yet solid.	Sturdy, yet rigid.	Strong, thick, reinforced.	Rocky or crude metal	Highly refined metal or alloy.	Liquid, highly flexible.
Impact	5	15	15	30	40	100	15
Blunt	2	10	15	20	20	70	20
Mixed	5	10	20	15	30	70	30
Sharp	10	10	15	20	40	80	40
Such as…	Egg Shells, Fine Crystal, Electronics.	Glass, Pottery, Bakelite.	Fiberglass,Plastics, Plywood. Thick Glass.	Brick, Wood planks, Bone, Black Rubber.	Concrete, Rock, Bronze, Cast Iron.	Steel , Titanium, Duralloy.	Water, Slime, Snow, Air.

Ultimately, if breaking an item becomes a serious part of the game the director knows best and this table only counts if he or she allows it.

It is also good to keep in mind that broken does not always mean obliterated. Sometimes the best way to destroy the robot running amok and building bird houses out of rocket scientists is to pour some coffee behind its titanium shielding, an attack which barely does any damage at all – to anything besides computer circuitry.

FALLING

Falling puts a character's durability against the force of gravity and cushions it with the hope of having something soft to land on. It uses the following Lgaite, which explains why some people go splat while others bounce. Because there is no defying gravity, even a failing effect will do some damage from a strong plummet.

Offense:	80 Die Strength
Defense:	Durability
Failure	Boing! 1 pt Current Vit per step.
Little	Shake: 2 pts Current Vit per step.
Good	Bounce: 3 pts Current Vit per step.
Average	Whack: 4 pts Current Vit per step.
Intense	Smack: 5 pts Current Vit per step.
Terrific	Fhwap: 6 pts Current Vit per step.
Excellent	Splat! 7 pts Current Vit per step.
Side Effects	Divine Intervention by Haystack (50%): a haystack or some other cushioning force has luckily ended up below one and no damage is taken. Wile E Coyote Effect (50%): Damage is doubled due to falling rock, safe, precipice or steam-roller.

The surface one falls upon will greatly effect the damage done by the fall through its damage type.

Damage Type	Possible Landing Conditions
Impact	Water, a dumpster, four feet of snow.
Blunt	Lawn, dirt, sand, less than two feet of snow.
Mixed	Rocky dirt, a loose pile of lumber, sidewalk.
Sharp	Jagged rocks, a bed of spikes, broken glass, a metal gate.

Armor. Armor and reflexes do not effect the damage done by a fall, not even padded armor is considered padded enough to dampen the damage. Metal armor may even cause more damage since it guarantees a hard surface to land upon. However, generally, the less abrupt and sharp a fall happens to be - the less damage it will do. Hence the reason why trampolines are not dangerous unless used under a chandelier.

Falling Long Distances. Since falling bodies speed up to a definite rate of travel and then stop (relative to acceleration) the damage potential of falling tops off at **100 steps**; meaning there is little difference between falling 300 feet and 3,000 feet. Still, don't try this at home.

FOOD & WATER

The fuel of life. Aside from having the energy to do anything, without food or water a body cannot repair itself and will eventually cease to function. Every day a character goes without an acceptable ration of food and water is a day closer to death.

Starvation. After one day without food the body stops regenerating tear damage. After two days without food the body stops regenerating wear damage. After **three days without food** the body starts damaging itself both **mentally and physically**, doing **10pts Sharp** damage at the end of each day until dead.

Dehydration expedites starvation. It works just like starvation, but it begins doing the 10 pts Sharp mental and physical damage at the end of day 1. Dehydration and Starvation do not compound each other. If lost in a desert and dying of both, you are really only dying of dehydration and taking 10 pts Sharp damage per day (so think happy thoughts :-).

Acceptable Rations. Even circus freaks who eat bicycles and light bulbs do not get their daily FDA allowance of nutrition from the performance. Characters need something resembling their regular daily diet in order to stave off starvation. Knowledge, Intuition, Wilderness Survival, Natural Aid, and Camping, as well as many different skills and abilities can be used to find acceptable food in a sticky situation. What constitues as an acceptable ration is determined by the character's size and weight and can be found on ones character sheet.

Fat. Fat is the body's natural defense against wasting away. It is only because of a healthy amount of fat that the body is able to go three days before feeling the full effects of starvation. The question which looms on most minds in an ugly situation is – what about the unhealthy fat which comes with a low physique?

Half of ones Fat weight can be used to cushion the blows of Starvation & Dehydration but only against physical damage. Mental damage still occurs at full blast. So if Harvey Wonderman, 60 lbs overweight, finds himself lost in the Sahara he will take no physical damage during the first three days of real starvation, but his mind will take 3 wounds and 30 points of Fort damage. On the fourth day he will start to take damage normally to both body and mind.

For those wondering about the sveltness of a starving character, 3lbs of unhealthy fat is lost for every physical wound absorbed or taken by the character until the Fat weight is gone (healthy fat is mixed in with a character's skeletal and muscle weight). After this the body starts burning valuable proteins from muscles and internal organs; here 1lbs is lost for every wound taken.

Unfortunately, physique often seems like more of a mental than a physical ability and characters who are carrying extra weight because of a physique deficiency will soon gain back what they've lost once put before a buffet table. Starvation diets never work.

FREAKING OUT

The Freak-Out is a psychological attack, a quick intense form of social combat designed to frighten, disorientate or even shred the sanity of its target. While it is hard to say what will universally scare all creatures, the situation must be right:

- A freak-out can only happen once per encounter as the object of fear springs out of hiding and into action. Of course, given a creature's ability to hide or disappear this popping out of nowhere can happen any number of times during an adventure.

- The more unbelievable the situation, the greater the possibility of a freak-out. For example, opening a thrush hut on a tropical island and being rushed by the polar bear hiding inside.

- Having ties to the supernaturally evil and/or undead is a definite plus but not a necessity. For example, an undead polar bear.

To freak someone out, the social combat skills Scare, Bully, Command and Intimidate work very well, yet a viable excuse can be made for Knowledge, Intuition or Charisma. A freak-out does count as an action and it can be used as a simultaneous action to physical combat, however a freak-out's success score does not need to be split up like multiple actions to scare a large number of characters.

Offense:	Die Strength (Scare, Bully, Command, Intimidate, Know, Intu, or Char)
Defense:	Stability plus any applicable Talent bonuses (ex: Courage)
Failure	Very funny, now take off the mask. It does come off, doesn't it?
Little	Gasp in shock, -1 Initiative for that moment.
Good	Scare! 1 Die Blunt Fort, -3 Initiative for that moment.
Average	Panic! 2 Dice Blunt Fort, -5 Initiative. Make Fort check or run away screaming for 1-10 moments.
Intense	Fear! 3 Dice Blunt Fort, -5 Initiative. Make Fort check or run away screaming for rest of the encounter.
Terrific	Fright! 5 Dice Mixed Fort, -7 Initiative. Make Fort check or run away screaming for rest of the evening.
Excellent	Freak-Out! 7 Dice Sharp Fort, -7 Initiative. Make Fort check to run away screaming or sit down and babble like an idiot, totally defenseless, for 3-30 moments before running away screaming.

Possible Side Effects

- Combat Frenzy (20%): gain any damage done in Fort as a success score bonus for physical combat until the object of fear is either dead or gone.

- Temporary Insanity (20%): In addition to the Lgaite, you also are transformed into a petrified Don Knotts, unable to do anything but scream for 1-10 moments.

- Scaird to Death (20%): Make three Durability checks. Fail all three and you're dead.

- Wet Pants (20%): the Horror, the Horror.

- White Schlock of Hair (20%): if the character doesn't have a natural shlock of white hair on his or her head – it is there now.

HEALING & RECOVERY

Out of necessity, characters in the ToAd heal damage at an astonishing rate. Wear damage (current fortitude and vitality) is healed with minutes of rest - time spent not doing anything, not even moving. Tear damage (mental and physical wounds) is healed with full nights of sleep. Whether a half night of sleep does anything for the character depends on ones director.

The rates of repair a character uses depends on the hardiness of the character's abilities and shows up on the character sheet as ones regeneration rate. Regeneration only works if a character has enough food and water to burn, see Adventure 101: Food & Water for more details.

Assisted Recovery. While some characters do quite a good job healing themselves naturally, others may benefit considerably from having a doctor of some sort assist their recovery. As with all actions, any preoccupation can be used to assist recovery if a decent case be made for its use (ex: Brain Surgery, but only because of extra info picked up along the way), however some skills are considered more fit to heal than others. For Example,

- Physical Healing: Surgery, Medicine, Wilderness Survival, First Aid, Natural Aid.
- Mental Healing: Medicine, Psychology, Natural Aid, Vivify;
- Sexual Healing: anything by Marvin Gaye.

These healing preoccupations generally use the same lgaite.

Offense:	Die Strength
Defense:	100 minus the Patient's DUR or PHY
Failure to Heal	Character takes its Regeneration Rate in damage until treated by someone more competent.
Little Change	Character does not regenerate anything.
Good Attempt	Character regenerates at ½ the natural rate.
Average Response	Character regenerates at the natural rate.
Intense Healing	Character regenerates at double the natural rate every other day.
Terrific Recovery	Character regenerates at double the natural rate.
Excellent, Thanks Doc!	Character regenerates at triple the natural rate.

Medicine. Whether it be a poultice of druidic herbs or access to a major metropolitan hospital, medicines work by adding a bonus to a healing preoccupation's success score. As of yet there is no universal list of medicines and their bonuses (or penalties, remember leeching and snake oil?) so one is really at the mercy of ones director. Likewise, given the potency or potential poison of a medicine, certain drugs may be considered illegal in the hands of anyone but a licensed professional.

Healing Potions. Those old RPG stand-bys, directly repair damage. You drink them and they repair a random number or rolled dice in both wear and tear damage – depending on the potion itself. Read its gamewise.

HIDING

The Easy Way. The easiest way to handle hiding is probably the most entertaining way. A director describes the area in which hiding is possible. Players say where their characters will hide. Imagination and reason preside over the matter of whether or not anyone is found. (Well yes, an ogre could hide under a lamp shade, but only if he was big and mean and ugly enough).

The Real Way. If you want to get technical about it, hiding requires everyone making either an Intuition or Hide skill check. The following modifiers apply.

Clutter: The directors estimates how much stuff there is to hide behind as well as how much space the seekers will need to examine. Ex: +30 for a large cluttered room, or –50 for a desert dune.

Size: Characters with a Size Index which is larger than man-sized (rounded to the nearest 1) will take a –20 penalty per increment. Characters smaller than man-sized will take a +10 per .1 size index. For example

Size Index	4	3	2	1.5	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5
Modifier	-60	-40	-20	-20	0	0	+10	+20	+30	+40

Camoflage: if the character has the skill Camouflage or a talent such as Camouflage, Dynamic (or Camouflage, Static if applicable), the talent's score is gained as a bonus. Under the spell Invisibility a hiding character gains three times the spell's strength as a bonus.

After making checks the hiders simply wait. Seekers come into the room and make Intuition checks. If just one or two characters are hiding then the effects table may be used to provide some interesting touches (with the hider's die strength on the defense); otherwise it is simply a matter of hoping the dice of the seekers do not roll up a stronger strength than that of the hiding characters. If they do then the hiding characters are exposed.

> So, Cochise, our kobold warrior, decides to hide in a treasure vault from some angry guards. He has no Hide skill so he needs to make an Intuition check. His Intuition ability is a modest 40, but the director says it's cluttered for a +20 bonus, and since Cochise is only a Size 0.6 he gains a +30. Total: 90. He rolls the dice and fails it with a 98. He has another moment and tries again. This time he rolls a 72. If he wanted to he could try again for a higher die roll, but 72 is good and there is the sound of footsteps in the hall.

LEAPING

As with all movement, if it can be done without thinking it doesn't require a check and is not considered an action. Most characters come with a jump speed (see movement) and can easily jump this many steps in every direction except up. Leaping is a different matter. Leaping requires thought. It is considered an action and is generally used to jump farther than a character is naturally allowed.

The Easy Way. Make a Muscle or Reflex check -20 for every extra step needed. If your die strength comes up greater than zero then you're fine. Not very theatrical but it works in a pinch.

The Real Way. On the offense, make a Muscle or Reflex check and take a –10 penalty for every ½ step needed beyond a character's Jump speed. When presented with a four step leap (10 to 12 feet), a character with a jump speed of 2 requires two extra steps to make the leap and will take a –40 penalty on the check.

On the defense is the awkwardness of the situation. Pouring rain, a muddy or snowy surface or leaping between moving vehicles – such factors should all be taken into account by ones director to provide a single defensive score for everyone looking to make the leap. How the character lands depends on the following lgaite.

Offense:	Mus or Ref Roll (+/- 10 per half step needed)
Defense:	Director given value, but generally easy.
Failure to Jump	GAAHHHHHHHHHHHHhhhhhhh.......!
Little Hop	Character is left hanging on by one hand and will fall if not helped up
Good Leap	Character is left hanging on with both hands Muscle check to pull oneself up.
Average Jump	Character lands on the middle of ledge, easily pulls self clear.
Intense Vault	Character lands standing.
Terrific Hurdle	Character looks really cool in the air and lands standing.
Excellent Flight	Same as Terrific but with a double back flip.

Running & Sprinting Starts

Leaping as it is begins with the character either walking or standing still. Quickly moving characters making a leap get to add ¼ their movement speed (sprint or run) to their jump speed, but only on one provision: even if this bonus gives them more than enough speed to make the leap they still must make the check on the thin chance they might misjudge the distance between ones foot and the lip of the crevasse they are sprinting towards.

TRICKY LEAPS

One stipulation of making a jump without a check is that it can be made without thinking. Squirrels can jump seven times their length from flimsy tree branch to flimsy tree branch without flinching because, as everyone knows, squirrels have no brains. Meanwhile, a human on a rooftop who needs to jump one step to an adjacent rooftop might seriously lock up with fright if stopping to look down. This is tricky leap, one that a character can naturally make only if able to stop thinking about it.

Tricky leaps take a normal leap check; however, they gain a bonus of +10 for every half step of movement which the character has beyond what is needed. Basically, this is the leaping distance penalty in reverse.

JUMPING VERTICALLY

A character's jump score is a horizontal jump not a vertical one. Vertically a character can Jump half of ones Jump score.

INITIATIVE

When two or more character try to act at the same time, Initiative tells us who goes first. Physical Combat jumps to mind as its most common use, but this is not the only case.

Basically, all characters come with two speed scores, a Mint for the mind (Mental Initiative) and a Pint for the body (Physical Initiative). **The highest speed score goes first**. Plain and simple. Mint and Pint scores come from a character's abilities and detail just fast a character can move unhindered. In most cases (with weapons, equipment, etc....) the speed modifiers are negative, showing just how badly they slow a character down.

Making Haste. The quickest way to speed up an initiative score is through an Exertion or Concentration bonus. These grant a +1 speed for every +5 bonus points put into it.

Dice? We Don't Need No Stinkin' Dice. The only time dice are rolled for initiative is when speed scores match. In this case each character rolls an a ten-sider and the highest roller goes first.

Parting Shots

If two fighting characters produce speed scores within **3 points** of each other then the slower attacker is granted a parting shot. No matter what the result of the quicker action may be — possibly even death or unconsciousness — the slightly slower action still gets a chance to connect.

Mazeless Mazes

Mazes were a definite staple of early gaming until it was figured out that half an hour of – "You turn left and the corridor goes on for ten feet, takes a right, and then another left and then ends in a T intersection, where you find footprints in the dust which oddly resemble your own." – was just not a whole lot of fun.

As an alternative to wasting time with canned confusion, the ToAd offers a system of Mazeless Mazes where characters use the dice to find their way around – as opposed to pencil scribbles on a paper napkin.

It starts with a maze-like area which may or may not have set physical borders. To be a mazeless maze all it needs is a **Complexity –** a defense score for the Effects table, and a **Key –** the number of Excellent effects it takes to get from Point A to Point B thru the maze.

Characters enter the maze and make one check for every moment of travel they make against the complexity of the maze to see if they can produce enough excellent effects to find the key to a way out. This is done with the following Lgaite:

Offense:	Die Strength of a Credible Ability or Preoccupation (Intu, Fort, Spelunking…).
Defense:	The Complexity of the Maze.
Failure	-10 on all further checks.
Little	-5 on all further checks.
Good	+0 on all further checks.
Average	+5 on all further checks.
Intense	+10 on all further checks.
Terrific	+15 on all further checks.
Excellent	+20 on all further checks & 1 key effect.

Side Effect: To keep the journey from becoming just another droll stroll through the English Hedgerows, side effects are often used to introduce such denizens as tricks, traps, wandering monsters, planned encounters, or even success by dumb luck.

Mazeless Mazes work great with areas which are simply too large or complex to work in the typical follow the map fashion. Cities, forests, sewer systems, hospitals, deep space, and even strange alternate dimensions where gravity is a joke make for excellent mazeless mazes.

Options

Treasure Maps. Typically a tool shows its value by supplying a bonus to the character's success score. Maps never truly reveal their potency until after a trip is over. They influence a trip by raising or lowering a maze's complexity by some degree which is only known to the director. Of course, it will not take long for a sharp character to figure out if a map is any good. For everyone else: maps found clutched in the bony hands of grinning skeletons are usually best avoided (or are they?).

Doubling Back. Just because a character has managed to go from point A to point B does not mean that point A can be effortlessly returned to from point B. In doubling back, the bonus a character left the maze with is cut in half for the return trip.

Speeding through a Maze. Characters pressed for time can speed their journey through most mazes by making Multiple Actions; however, the number of multiple actions a character can make is limited to 1 action for every 3 steps per moment of speed traveled. On top of this, the typical penalties for Running and Sprinting (-20 & -40 respectively) still apply. So a character running through a maze at 5 SPM can make two multiple actions per moment but with a –20 running penalty. Sometimes slow & steady does win the race.

Chase Scenes. In a chase scene the coveted point B is not so much a place as it is an outcome. For the chasee point B typically means irrefutable escape from being chased. For the chaser point B typically means backing the chasee into a corner with no exit. During such a chase, when the chaser and chasee amass equal amounts of bonus (or penalty) in their attempt to maneuver through a maze they briefly encounter each other. Chasees can elect to drop one level of effect (ex: Good to Low) in order to avoid such a chance encounter. Chasers have no such option. Such chance encounters will last at least one moment before the chasee can peel off into the maze again.

Planes, Trains, and Automobiles. Admittedly, the ToAd has no support for vehicles. This is because it has something big in mind for them which simply hasn't been developed yet. Please stay tuned.

MOVEMENT

Characters move with a speed known as their SPM or Steps Per Moment. It is simply the number of steps a character may make per moment. Of course, if the game supplies no way of measuring distance then movement only tells us who moves the quickest. SPM is not anything which can be checked with the dice or used to modify something else.

ENCUMBRANCE

The best way to slow a character down is to load up with stuff. The ToAd handles encumbrance by breaking down the maximum amount of weight a character can lift into five categories: Moving, Packing, Lugging, Trudging & Straining – the names say it all. Each category is marked by a weight threshold (ex: 96 pounds). A character carrying this amount or more (but less than the next threshold) will move with the speed scores of that particular level of encumberment. The only exception to this rule deals with armor bulk. Bulky suits of armor may increase ones encumberment level beyond the weight a character is carrying.

Characters carrying their maximum lift cannot move from the spot they are standing in.

WALK, RUN, SPRINT!

Walking is a character's normal movement. With running & sprinting a character trades the ability to do other things with the need for speed. Running causes a –20 and sprinting a –40 against any action done while in motion.

A little explanation: Occasionally a character will have a walk score which is faster than a more sluggish character's sprint score – even though the two characters stand at the same height. How can this be? The sluggish character's body is simply not comfortable moving as fast as its gait allows. The sluggish character's run is a fast walk. His sprint is someone else's jog. With quick characters the reverse is true. The walk, done at full speed, is not really a walk but a graceful stride which does not upset the rest of the body to where it takes a penalty.

Walking usually refers to land based travel (aka: trot, slither, hop, crawl, etc.). Not all creatures were built to do it. Many swim or fly as their base form of movement, and it should be kept in mind that running and sprinting are variants of this base form of movement. A fish cannot sprint on land, but it certainly can do a sprinting swim in the ocean.

EXHAUSTION

Although there are many different kinds of movement (swim, jump, fly etc...), there are really only the three forms – Normal, Run, and Sprint. Each will take a toll on the character with prolonged movement.

Normal – On a hike or forced march it drains **5 Vit per Half-hour**.

Running – On a jog it drains **1 Vit per minute**.

Sprinting – Any movement not made for prolonged use will drain **1 Vit per moment.**

TESTS OF SKILL

Who is better? Who is best? One way to find out – without having characters kill each other – is to have them make actions and then compare the effects they create. Unfortunately, this often leaves two ubermensch consistently beating each other senseless with excellent effects to no avail. A better way might be to have characters compare success scores. But with no dice rolling? What fun is there in that!?

Instead, characters should hold a Test of Skill. Opposing characters decide on an attribute to check, agree on how many bouts will make up the test and then roll the dice once for each bout. **The effects table is never consulted.** Successful die rolls are tallied up, and once the test of skill is over the character with the highest tally wins.

Time-wise, although each bout consists of one action and is considered to be only a moment long, time can be allowed to slip to accommodate those actions with long or indefinite set up periods such as cooking or research. Which does not mean that the setup time disappears. It is simply ignored. A five-day, five-bout chili cook-off where nothing out of the ordinary happens while the chefs are preparing food can be settled in the five pinnacle moments when the food is being judged.

Marathons & Team Sports. One of the great things about a Test of Skill is that any number of competitors can compete at once in a marathon style competition. Or they can even work together as a team, pooling their points, and the team with the highest tally wins.

Tugs-O-War

A Tug-O-War is a special test of skill where opposing characters or teams opt use their success to hinder the opposition's efforts. When it comes time to add a moment's worth of points to ones tally, competitors can elect to either **add all of it** to their tally or **subtract all of it** from an opponent's tally. The moment's harvest of points may **not** be broken up and given out judiciously. Tug-o-wars also differ from tests of skill in that they are fought for as long as it takes one side or the other to reach a set number of points; a factor which makes the decision to add or subtract ones tally from the opposition an especially tricky decision.

> Our intrepid adventurers have fooled the orc guards out of their garrison and cut down most of them on the field of battle. A few runts, however, have run back across the drawbridge and begun pulling on the ropes of its broken winch. Seeing the bridge start to lift, Rasberry Roane threw a grappling hook on top of it and was almost dragged into the moat before her fellow adventurers jumped on it. The director declares a tug-o-war with the first team to make muscle checks reaching 200 winning the bridge pull. **Round 1.** Rasberry's team had four successful rolls totalling: 112. The Orcs had six successful rolls totalling 68. **Round 2.** Rasberry's team had five successful roles totalling 125. The Orcs make a valient effort and produce seven successful rolls totalling 98. They know they will lose if they don't give this up and subtract half of it from Rasberry's team, knocking them down to 169. **Round 3.** Rasberry's team produces a whopping 155. The Orcs produce a measely 45. Even if they were to subtract this from Rasberry's total of 324 the result would still be greater than 200. Rasberry's team wins! The bridge comes crashing down, leaving a small team of Orcs hanging quite precariously by a rope in its archway.

Any skill may be used in a test of skill or a tug-o-war, even combative ones (think sparring). If a test of skill ever breaks out into something more serious, such as social or physical combat, this usually brings it to an abrupt end.

MAGIC

Magic permeates the entire ToAd universe. No one truly understands it, but many people and things know how to manipulate it for their own good. At base, magic is a bit like fire. It is a force of nature which simply needs the right combination of circumstances to erupt. Unfortunately, it also needs fuel to burn to stay in existence and will disappear just as soon as it runs out. Some say the wood of this fire is the will of the magic caster (people who are known for getting quite toasty in the brain after long bouts of casting spells). Others believe the magic caster only provides the spark and the force of the magic is unleashed from the physical world or possibly the spiritual world. How else does one explain magical items? The debate over the nature of magic has raged for thousands of years and will continue to rage on for thousands more.

SUPRANATURAL AFFINITY

One thing is for certain, magic rarely ever occurs on its own. Magic is brought into existence through a conscious effort known as casting a spell, and the people who do so are called magic-casters. They are a disparate bunch whose only unifying principle is a talent known as Supranatural Affinity. This is the genetic key for making magic work and separating the actual magic casters from the mystically minded interpretative dancers. It is the reason why some characters are simply incapable of making magic work, while others snap their fingers and firebolts shoot everywhere. The talent itself doesn't do anything else so one point will suffice.

Characters without the Affinity can work magical items (because, in a woefully unpoetic frame of mind, magic items are really nothing more than magic dispensers, sorta like Pez dispensers except more dangerous) but to make magic from scratch Supranatural Affinity is a must-have.

SCHOOLS OF MAGIC

Of course, having the affinity alone is like having an eye for painting but no one around to tell you that you have it or how to use it. Here enters the various schools of magic. While they do represent actual schools of magic, on a character sheet they are basically skills with funny names like Erythinaeus, Curlee, and Buaggabuagga. By themselves they teach a character everything they ever wanted to know about a technique of magic casting except for the spells themselves. These are bought separately. The skill school does provide the character with a list of spells the skill teaches, but it provides no magic by itself.

SPELLS

Spells are skill accessories. They depend on the skill school which teaches them for a success score which is then tempered by the spell's own difficulty. Unlike other games, spells are not separated into a hierarchy of levels, and a character does not be of a certain level to cast a certain spell. Characters are not limited in the number of times a spell can be cast, and they do not need to stay up late memorizing or praying for spells on night before their use.

TIME & TOLL

Characters do, however, need to be careful of the spells they learn to cast. Magic-casting is one of the most mentally and sometimes physically exhausting feats a character can attempt, and whether or not a spell check is successful, a spell will take its toll. Typically this is just a few points of Fort or Vit, but energy is neither created nor destroyed the stuff of magic does need to come from somewhere. Generally, the bigger the impact a spell has, the larger a toll it will extract.

Time is how long it takes to cast a spell. Those marked Instantaneous can be cast at the snap of ones fingers (sometimes literally!). All other spells will eat up the actions in between the decision to cast the spell and its resulting fireworks. For example, during the three moments it takes to cast the spell Gecko, the caster may move about, but she cannot attack creatures, cast other spells, or do anything but concentrate on getting the spell to work. The dice may not be rolled for any reason beyond reaction checks.

COMBAT CASTING

As if magic-casting wasn't hard enough, some supranaturally talented people choose to fling spells about while others are intent on filling their star studded robes with the mean barbs of arrows and the blades of battle axes. This is known as combat-casting. It is not much different from normal magic casting except that the time it takes to cast a spell inevitably effects the defense one will use against an attack.

For spells whose time is listed as Instantaneous the character's **Total Defense** is used. These spells are intentionally made with a hair trigger so that the caster has the time to react to a touchy situation.

Spells which have a casting time longer than Instantaneous yet less than 1 minute are so involved they cause the caster to defend with their **Surprise Defense**.

Spells which have a casting time that is greater than 1 minute are so complex they leave the caster, during the whole length of the casting, using the **Prone Defense**.

Of course, a magic caster does not have to remain at a low level of defense and can slip back inside the shell of Total Defense on a moment's notice (meaning, yes, it will be the considered the character's action for that moment); unfortunately, the spell will be lost in the process.

SPELL BOOKS

A spell book to a magic caster is as valuable as a cook book to a chef. Their presence does not magically allow the novice magic-caster to cast the spells they describe, but with practice they can be used to learn how to cast spells – just so long as the school one follows does teach it.

How well and at what speed a magic caster can learn a spell from a spell book depends on ones director. It must be said that the cost of learning the spell in effort points will eventually have to be paid.

Magical Items

In the ToAd there are three kinds of magic items: focusing tools, enhanced tools and enchanted items.

A Focusing Tool can be anything: a staff, wand, ring, tiara, sword, crystal ball, wind chime, dream catcher, roach clip, fly swatter, bowling ball, etc.… As different as they may be, focusing tools are unified in their purpose: to help magic casters cast spells. Therefore they are not of much use to anyone who cannot cast a spell, but to the magic casting set they are some of the most valuable and talked about treasures in the universe. Focusing tools are made by casting the arduous, costly and innocuous sounding spell Enhance on the future focusing tool. This unique spell will destroy a focusing tool if it fails or if it does not provide a better bonus than the one it already has (and yes, you or someone else can enhance a focusing tool endlessly). Because of this, while the world may be littered with low level focusing tools, truly powerful tools are very rare. Thankfully, for non-magical characters, a magic caster may only use one focusing tool at a time.

Enhanced Items are focusing tools for everybody else: magical swords, shields, yoyos, turnip twaddlers, and that sort of truck. Enhanced items are often rarer than focusing tools simply because most wizards and witches don't consider them worth the trouble of creation. The magic locked up in an enhanced item is not as powerful as that in an enchanted item, however this magic is constant and does not need magical charges to run.

Gamewise, Enhanced Items and Focusing Tools often have their names followed by their bonus, ex: Wizard's Staff +20, or the adventure standard Long Sword +10 (In that other game, this would be a Long Sword +2). In the equipment database the bonus should be recorded as the item's magical bonus, just for good measure. These bonuses will not be factored into an attack's BCH on ones character sheet. The reason being that - like all bonuses - it gets added to the die strength and not the BCH.

This creates a problem with Armor since dice are not rolled to use it. With magical armor – the bonus must be added to the armor's normal defense when it is recorded into the ICE. Normal Chainmail has a defense of 45. Magical Chainmail +10 should be recorded as having a defense of 55. Should this chainmail ever lose its magical charge, ten points would be subtracted from its defense.

Enchanted Items are things which have had both spells and the power to run them trapped inside the item – usually to be released on the spur of the moment by way of a key phrase, thought or gesture. Gamewise, a character's Fortitude, Intuition, General Attack Score, or Magical Skill School Score (Yqe, Wicker, etc.) may be used to wield it.

Making an enchanted item is quite an ordeal, see the spell Enchant for more info. Items can be both enhanced and enchanted, but these are naturally rare since both spells Enhance and Enchant run the risk of destroying the magical item every time they are cast.

Typically enhanced and enchanted items are of very simple design because the past has shown that the more an item changes shape from when it was enhanced or enchanted, the more likely it will be to lose its mojo. Magical does not mean indestructible and items which undergo a lot of use or have a large number of moving parts that wear out with use (such as in submachine guns and vehicle engines) do not hold magic for long. Magical arrows and bullets are very rare since they seem to always lose any enhancement they have on impact.

The use of precious metals, gems and ornate woods in the construction of magical items is not necessary, yet is often used by magic casters in order to tell the world that the item is precious. No one knows if there is a maximum amount of magic any one item can hold.

PHYSICAL COMBAT

There is a definite fantasy about violence in the human imagination. A dream of thwarting foes without breaking a sweat. A dream of bringing about a final resolution to a problem by wiping its problematic side off the face of the Earth. A dream of not feeling any more fear under a spray of bullets, a volley of arrows or a singing sword than a spectator at a Fourth of July fireworks display.

Of course, the reality of violence has people quickly discovering just how much they have taken for granted the little things in life – like fingers, eyes, hands and heads. Of course, there is a reason why it is called fantasy gaming. The ToAd keeps with the tradition of fantasy gaming but on a compromised level. Characters can still take more damage and heal it quicker than people in reality. By way of talents and skills such as Lucky Misses and Calculated Misses a character can even approach movie hero invulnerability. However, forty arrow wounds do not heal overnight, and surviving a battle is sometimes more a matter of putting up the right defense rather than offense. Having a high intensity level does not make one immune to sharp edges. Even at the 30th level, a character who is not prepared for the occasional dagger wielding miscreant can be killed with a single blow. Consider your character warned!

Now on with the fun stuff.

COMBAT PREOCCUPATIONS

Before picking a fight it is usually a good idea to have something to fight with, namely a weapon and a combat preoccupation to power it. Combat skills are typically named after the family of weapons they represent. The skill Daggers can be used to fight with any short knife-like weapon from a bowie knife to a shaving razor. Flexible Weapons is a skill more in line with the use of flails, chains and nunchuckas.

On a character sheet a character's attacks, or assertions might look something like this.

Attacks	Powered By	Spd	Rng	BCH	PAR	L	G	A	I	T	E	Dt	Hands	Bns
Stilletto	Daggers	11	1	64%	-4	7	17	29	48	62	87	Sp	1	
Morning Star	Flexible Weapons	8	2	84%	-17	9	24	44	68	97	122	Mx	1	
Morning Star	Whirlwind Attack	8	2	84%	-17	9	24	44	68	97	122	Mx	1	
Bow, Short	Bows	7	r2	70%	-0	5	15	25	35	45	60	Sp	2	+20
General Attack		6	1	62%	-8	12	26	39	52	64	77	Bt	1	

Here is a quick guide to the columns.

Powered By. This is the preoccupation or skill accessory used to power the attack. Occasionally, a weapon will have multiple entries because it uses different specialized skill accessories. In the sample table the Morning Star has a normal attack powered by Flexible Weapons and a Whirlwind Attack which can attack in all directions without penalty. The character is only carrying one Morning Star, but has two options for its use.

Spd. Speed is the character's Pint minus the weapon's speed score. Faster attacks have greater speed scores than slow ones.

Rng. Range. A simple number denotes a Melee attack. A number prefixed by the letter **r** indicates a Ranged attack. A number prefixed by the letter **e** is an Explosive attack.

BCH. Base Chance to Hit. This is the number the dice are rolled against to make the attack. It is the success score of the skill or skill accessory powering it.

PAR. Parry. If a character decides to parry an attack, this is the figure that gets subtracted from the opponent's die strength.

Lgaite. These numbers are the amounts of Current Vit damage the attack does for each effect.

DT. Damage Type. Damage type converts current vitality damage into wounds.

Hands. The number of hands required to use the attack.

Bns. Bonus. Some weapons carry a magical/high quality die strength bonus. This is it. Be sure to add it in when used.

The General Attack

Even without a weapon, no character is completely defenseless. All come with the General Attack which is the untrained, unskilled, kicking, slapping, scraping, biting, scream-like-a-little-girl, attack of someone who has not fought anyone since kindergarten. Its stats are taken from the character's abilities and can be quite high, however it is rarely as good as a standard attack since no skill bonuses can be bought for it.

Unfamiliar Weaponry

A more common use of the General Attack is to provide unfamiliar weaponry with a BCH, namely the General Attack's BCH. Of course, this is all done with the director's approval. A caveman who picks up a hi-tech microwave rifle would be hard pressed to use it as anything but a club.

Claws & Jaws

Some races have built in defenses such as porcupine quills and shark teeth. These assertions typically use Claws & Jaws skills such as Chomp, Stomp, Gore and Skewer to provide their BCH's; however, they may also opt for the General Attack's BCH. All that separates Claw & Jaw attacks from other attacks is that the damage dealing part of the attack cannot be easily separated from its owner – at least, not without great trepidation, protest, and possibly some chomping, stomping, goring and/or skewering.

A Round of Combat

At its core, physical combat is simply the check of a combat preoccupation against someones armor. The matter of Action - Check – Effect does not change. Here is how a round of combat proceeds:

1.) The Round Begins. A fight starts, continues, or is carried over from the previous round.

2.) An Attack is Declared. Combatants state who they are going to attack and with what. It is assumed that everyone has moved to where they need to be to make their attacks work. When working with a large number of combatants, characters & creatures should be separated into fighting groups, each of which will resolve their combat before the next group does.

3.) Initiative. Fighters compare their attack speeds and the highest speed attacks first. No dice are rolled. An exertion bonus can be taken to speed up ones score if needed. Characters with speeds within three points of each other will hit simultaneously.

4.) Attack! Just before the dice are rolled, characters declare any extra modifiers they might like (Concentration/Exertion Bonuses, Parries, etc…). And then the dice hit the table. If the number rolled is less than or equal to the BCH it is a success. The die roll becomes the attack's die strength, is adjusted by any modifiers, and taken to the Effects Table. If the attack misses, the next combatant steps up to bat.

5.) Damage is Done. At the Effects table the die roll takes a column and the defender's Total Defense takes a row. Where the two intersect determines the effect of an attack and its damage is inflicted immediately.

6.) Next Attack. If the character is making multiple or simultaneous attacks, these are all taken care of at once; otherwise, the action shifts to the next quickest combatant in the fighting group. Once this fighting group is finished the next fighting group takes care of their business and so on until everyone has had a chance to act.

7.) The Round Ends. One moment of time has passed. If anyone is left standing then the next round begins.

Combat Initiative

There is a definite advantage in being able to hit first. If you hit an opponent hard enough and fast enough there is a very good chance he won't have the chance to hit back.

Initiative is fully explained in Adventure 101, Initiative, but to recap: initiative is compared – not rolled. Whoever produces the greatest speed score hits first. Only when speed scores come up equal are ten-siders rolled to see who goes first.

Combat brings with it a few extra initiative modifiers:

- **Sheathed Weapons** may be used in the round in which they are drawn but they take a -20 Speed modifier.

- **Characters caught by Surprise** suffer a -10 Speed modifier.

Range

Melee Weapons are Daggers, Flails, Kicks, Punches, Lances and such. Any attack where the damage dealing part of the weapon does not leave the control of its wielder is a Melee Attack. Even if a weapon isn't recognizable by name (what is a Ghurki anyway?) the weapon's range will expose it as a melee weapon. This is a plain number representing the attack's reach in inches. It only matters when first engaging in combat (see below).

Ranged Weapons are Pistols, Boomerangs and ICBMs. The damage dealing part of the weapon leaves the control of the attacker before doing damage. While this does make for considerably greater range it also creates an accuracy issue. Range for a missile weapon is a number prefixed by a small **r** which represents the number of steps a missile will travel before the attacker's die strength drops by 1.

Since basic combat doesn't take distance or movement into close consideration. A table of assumed distances is used to show how range will effect a shooter's chance to hit. This is the Missile Range table on the Basic Combat Cheat Sheet.

Entering & Exiting Combat

There is nothing cryptic about entering and exiting combat. The only thing which changes is the matter of who strikes first in melee combat. The range of a melee weapon is the length of the weapon plus the length of its wielder's reach as measured in inches. Basically, **on first clash the longer weapon hits first,** irregardless of initiative unless the lengths of the two attacks come within five inches of each other. After this first attack the combatants are said to be engaged. They may not move forward through each other without resorting to some kind of attack fitted to the maneuver (Tackle, Side Step, etc.), but they may move side to side or walk backwards. Walking backwards will take one safely out of combat – providing ones opponent decides to not pursue the matter.

Exiting combat quickly is a different matter. Running or Sprinting away from combat means turning ones back on an opponent. Since all movement happens at the beginning of a moment, this means that for that one moment, the character will have to defend using Surprise Defense, and may not attack unless bearing a skill accessory which allows it, such as Whirlwind Attack.

Attack!

For the offense the round has four options aside from the typical reach out and whack something approach to physical combat: hit it harder, hit it repeatedly, hit it with everything, or hit it with something that works.

Hit it harder means using an Exertion bonus for melee attacks or a Concentration bonus for ranged attacks. Either may be used once per moment – not per attack. Exertion burns 5 Current Vit. Concentration exhausts 5 Current Fort. These bonuses are found on ones character sheet and arise naturally from the abilities.

Hit it repeatedly means making multiple attacks as detailed in Adventure 101, Doing More than One Thing at Once. It is important to remember the key rule of "What seems real is real." While making seven attacks with a sledge hammer in two seconds is harsh but feasible, seventeen for anything but the god of thunder is not. Likewise, weapons which need to be reloaded cannot be used to make multiple attacks.

Hit it with everything means making simultaneous actions as detailed in Adventure 101, Doing More than One Thing at Once. The rules remain the same with stress on the stipulation that – for initiative – the attacker uses the speed of the slowest attack. Because of this Simultaneous Attacks need to be declared before initiative.

Hit it with something that works. While a weapon may be drawn and used in one round (with a -20 speed modifier) unless you want to simply drop the weapon and draw another - it is considered an action to sheathe a weapon and draw a different one.
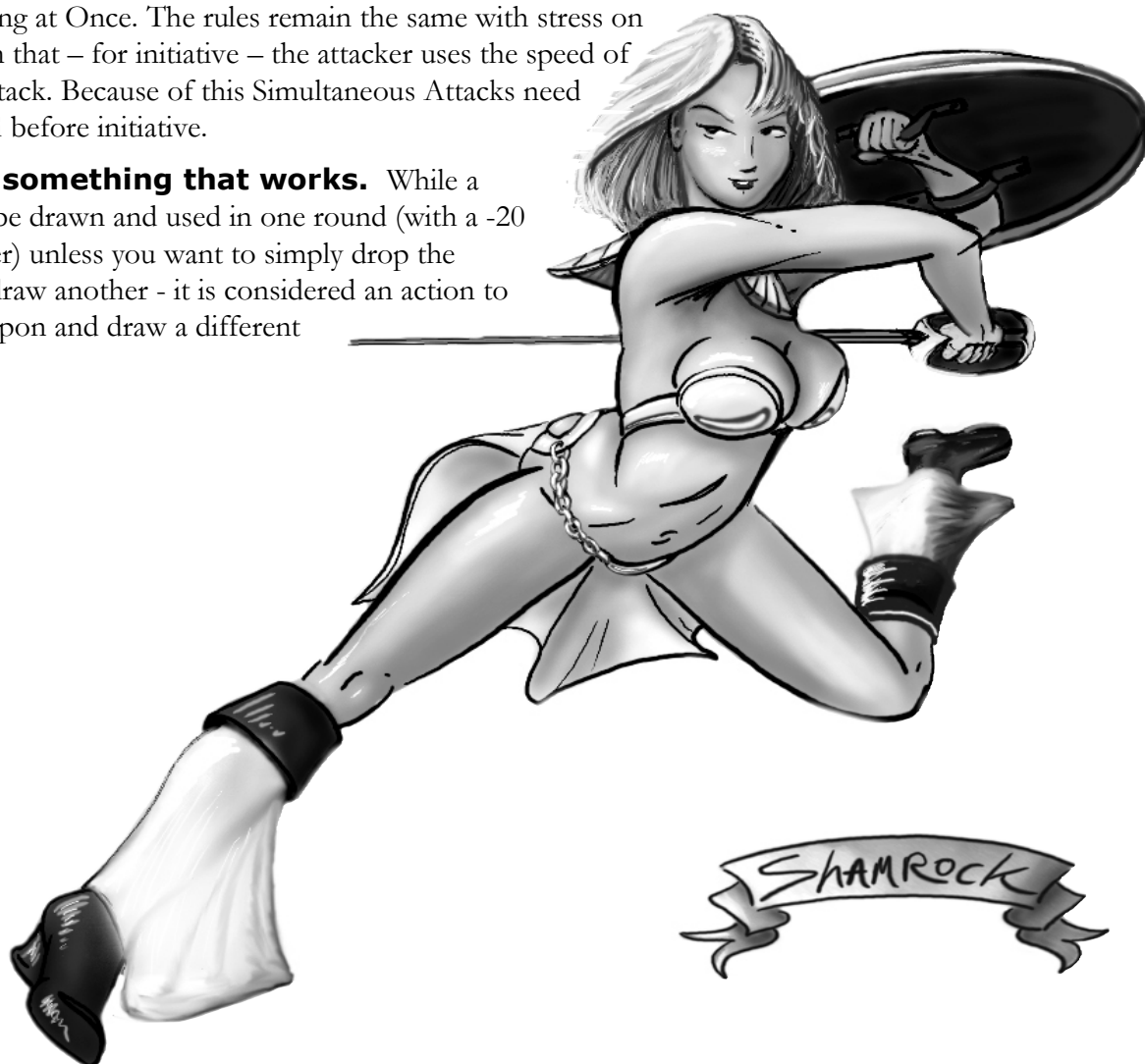
DEFEND!

If an attack is successful, what separates total carnage from a nasty shaving nick is the Defender's Total Defense. This figure is made from a character's RDF, Armor, Helmet, and Shield.

RDF, THE REFLEXIVE DEFENSIVE FACTOR.

Anything with the ability to move will have an RDF. This is that last-second subconscious flinch which serves to move vital areas out of danger. If a character is unconscious, immobile or completely and utterly unaware of the attack then RDF is lost. RDF is equal to a character's Reflexes divided by 3. It may be dampened by the bulk of the armor one wears.

ARMOR

Armor is anything worn on the surface of ones skin which helps dampen a blow. It can be as miniscule as a jock strap or as all encompassing as a suit of Maximillian Plate.

Base Bulk reflects the stiffness of a suit of armor and how it retards movement. No matter how much weight a character is carrying, base bulk determines the starting encumberment level of a character wearing that armor.

RDF Modifier shows how a suit of armor can stifle a character's natural defenses. When worn, armor subtracts its modifier from a character's RDF but only until the RDF disappears. If a character with a 30 RDF puts on a suit of Platemail the armor's -40 RDF Modifier would not drop the RDF to –10 but would stop it at 0.

SHIELDS

A shield is a piece of armor consciously moved about to better ones defense. Unlike armor, a shield can benefit from the Shield's preoccupation which offers a Defense bonus based on the ability of the user verses the size of his shield. A small shield, being more maneuverable than a large shield, amasses a greater benefit from the shields skill. Use of a shield requires one free appendage. Even though it has its own preoccupation, using a shield is **not** considered an action.

HELMETS

Nothing protects better than a helmet when you consider what it protects. Unfortunately only one helmet can be worn per character and all heads need to be covered to gain its protection (sorry Ettins). Characters without a head per se, cannot enjoy the benefits of a helmet (sorry Oozes). Characters who once had a head but now are at a loss for where it might be should seriously rethink their choice of helmet in the next life.

DEFENSE VARIATIONS

Total Defense only defends when the character is aware of where the attack is coming from and what its nature might be. The following three variants typically appear on the front of a character sheet beside the Total Defense.

Grab Defense. Grab Defense defends against an attack which only seeks to strike the character as a target and not pierce the character's armor to do damage. Typical grab attacks are wrestling grapples, bolo and lasso strikes. It it the character's RDF plus any armor modifications.

Surprise Defense. Characters caught off-guard by surprise (jumped by hidden assailants, caught by a booby trap, etc…) can only use their Armor, Helm and RDF for defense. Basically, it is the Total Defense without a Shield.

Prone Defense applies to characters rendered immobile, unconscious, or caught completely unaware (ex: shot by a sniper, or back-stabbed). Prone characters have only their Armor and Helm to defend with.

With both Surprise and Prone Defense the option to parry is out of the question.

DOING DAMAGE

Physical combat does damage in two places at once. First it does Wear Damage to the defender's Current Vitality. Next it does Tear Damage to the Physical Wounds.

WEAR DAMAGE

Wear damage is like exhaustion. It is Vitality lost by the body's own effort to hold against a blow. In game terms, wear damage is the number listed under an attack's Lgaite and is subtracted from the defender's Current Vitality.

A character whose Vitality drops below zero will fall unconsious and not wake up until at least half of the original Vitality has been regenerated. Luckily, Vitality regenerates quickly with simple rest and can be done during a combat encounter if the situation allows for a fighter to disengage.

TEAR DAMAGE

Tear damage is wound damage, the actual destruction done by an attack. It is found by comparing the attack's wear damage to its Damage Type.

Damage Type	Abbreviation	Wear Damage needed to Score one Wound
Impact	Ip	30
Blunt	Bt	20
Mixed	Mx	15
Sharp	Sp	10

Typically this is all figured out beforehand and affixed as a superscript to each Lgaite entry. Ex: the Great Axe which does Mixed damage: $20^1/40^2/70^4/90^6/130^8/173^{11}$ An average hit from this Great Axe does 90 points of Current Vit damage as well as 6 physical wounds. 90 point Wear and 6 points Tear.

Other damage types do exist, but they are rare and tend to work off of the four basic types.

Acid (Ac), does Mixed damage on the first round and then Impact damage every following round, losing 10 points of wear damage each round until diluted away. When attacked multiple times with acid, all subsequent attacks replace prior attacks. They do not gang up on an opponent.

Electricity (El). Electricity does Blunt damage to the body and Impact damage of an equal amount to the mind. An electrical attack does wear and tear to both body and mind.

Fire (Fi). As painful as a burn can be, fire only does Blunt damage. Unfortunately, if a creature damaged by fire is deemed to have caught fire (Director's discretion) then the fire will continue to do half its original damage until the flames are extinguished.

Laser (Ls), lasers are extremely sharp and do 1 wound for every 5 points of damage.

Physical Combat Extras

This is an alphabetical listing of combat rarities which can be used on and off the battleboard.

Armor Damage

Armor naturally takes damage with use; however, it is not an easy thing for a game to keep track of so the ToAd leaves it up to the character with this option. At a player's request, armor (helmets, shields and armor) can take up to half an attack's wear damage against its defense score.

If a character is about to be hit with 70 points of Sharp Vit damage then 35 points of it can be absorbed by armor damage. A suit of plate mail with a defensive score of 55 would now only protect at 20, but thankfully 35 Vit points and 3 wounds of damage did not have to be taken by the character. Of course, armor cannot absorb more damage than it has defensive score. If our barbarian hero was wearing little more than a jockstrap (Defense: 5) when an orc's mace hit it, the jock absorb 5 points of damage before becoming useless and letting the rest of the damage pass through (youch!).

Magical Armor Damage. Most armor which takes damage in this way is reduced to scrap. A good blacksmith may be able to repair a treasured suit, but if the suit received any bonuses due to magic the magical bonus will be lost first and require a very friendly magic caster to repair. Magical plate mail which once defended at 85, now only defends at 55 max. The best a smith can do for damaged magical armor is get it looking pretty again.

Automatic Hits

In certain exceedingly rare circumstances, an attack will automatically hit – such as when grappling a creature with electrified skin, someone is going to get shocked and it won't be the moray eel. Basically, the creature who is guaranteed a hit rolls the dice as normal but misses are disregarded. The dice are rolled until they produce a number equal to or less than the attack's BCH. If the attack fails on the effects table, then it simply fails. It struck but it didn't carry enough force to do any damage.

Burst Weaponry

Burst Weapons are defined by their ability to fire a spray of bullets over a small area. It shows up in the weapon's bonus as two numbers separated by a slash. Ex: +130/5b.

The first number is the bonus gained from firing a burst. The second is the number of bullets consumed by the burst. So a sterling submachinegun with a +130/5b bonus will add +130 to the firer's die strength during a five shot burst. The weapon only makes one attack per round, but this massive attack may be separated up to five times (one for each bullet) by way of multiple actions among targets standing in a close group.

Charging

In charging a character loses the ability to parry yet gains a +3 bonus for every SPM of declared movement for that moment. So, if a character says he is sprinting at 15 SPM that moment he will gain a whopping +45 bonus. Unfortunately, he is also sprinting which tacks on a -40 penalty and brings the bonus down to +5.

Characters who charge and hit will need to make a Reflex reaction check to remain standing. Those hit by the charging character must do the same but gain a bonus of +1 per pound they weigh more than the attacking character (or -1 per pound if they weigh less). Whether or not characters are picked up, tossed aside, or pushed back before dropped depends on how badly they failed (and the director's imagination).

Characters who charge and miss are honor bound by the laws of inertia to continue moving forward at least 1/2 their SPM. Characters can charge with any form of movement, walking included. Charging is more a mindset than a form of movement.

EXPLOSIONS

Explosions come with an e-range which determines how big an area they will effect when they go off. The number is equal to ¼ the diameter of the blast in steps. An e1 explosion will have a 4 step blast radius, creating a sphere roughly 12 feet in diameter. In basic combat everyone thought to be in range will be attacked equally by the blast.

In battleboard combat, the range divides the blast into four parts. At the point of detonation and out for a number of steps equal to the range, the blast's die strength will take a +10. From there for another length or range there is no bonus. For one more length beyond that the die strength takes a -10. For one more length beyond that it will take a -30. And beyond this the blast is ineffective. If the blast has an e-range less than 1 it loses the +10 bonus at the point of detonation.

Steps for an e2 blast	Point of Detonation, Step 0	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
Die Strength Modifier	+10	+10	0	0	-10	-10	-30	-30

Defending Against Explosions. Explosions may not be parried. Armor, Helmets & RDF work but shields will only protect the person carrying the shield if it was pointed towards the point of detonation before the blast went off. If a player can prove that some kind of obstruction stood between the character and the blast (such as another character) then a director might grant a Defense bonus for this shielding.

KNOCKED DOWN

There are many ways to get knocked down but only one way to get back up, and that is with a Reflex check – as an action, not a reaction check. So if the character has already acted this round, he will need to lie on his back until the next moment allows him the chance to act. Characters who are knocked down before having the chance to act may try to get back up in the same moment.

Characters who have fallen and can't get up will need to keep trying until they do. Because of the stunning effect of being knocked down, to do anything other than try to get up requires a Fort check first. While trying to stand up, fallen characters defend with their Surprise defense.

Characters who have a skill such as acrobatics or gymnastics or the skill accessory Bounce Back may use that skill instead of the Reflex check to get back up. They may even use it as a simultaneous action to a normal attack.

MARTIAL ARTS

Martial Arts deal with hand to hand (and foot and chin and knee and head) combat. Like magic casting, martial arts skills are Skill Schools. They provide a character with a knowledge of the art, a success score to power attacks and a list of attacks that the school teaches. They do no damage by themselves, and the attacks they teach must be bought separately. Gamewise, martial arts attacks are almost indistinguishable from other melee attacks (that is, of course, until one hits you).

Dbase. The big difference between the martial arts and weapon attacks is that all martial arts attacks use a Dbase percentage to figure out how much damage they do. Basically, the Dbase takes a percentage of the Skill School's success score to create the damage done by a little effect. This little effect is doubled to create the good effect, tripled to create the average effect, quadrupled to create the intense effect, quintupled to create the terrific effect, and sextupled to create the excellent effect. The result is an attack which – unlike weapon powered attacks – is more closely linked to the wielder's ability to use it.

Little Effect	=	(System Skill's Success Score + Skill Bonus) * Dbase
Good Effect	=	Little Effect x 2
Average Effect	=	Little Effect x 3
Intense Effect	=	Little Effect x 4
Terrific Effect	=	Little Effect x 5
Excellent Effect	=	Little Effect x 6

Samurai Joe has purchased the Dragon Claw attack for his Jujitsu preoccupation. He has a 69% Success Score in the art and no Skill Bonus Score (for dbase purposes the -40 difficulty modifier is ignored). To find the attack's damage he claws a calculator and starts punching buttons: 13% of 69 rounds off to **9** points of damage, 2 x 9 = **18**, 3 x 9 = **27**, 4 x 9 = **36**, 5 x 9 = **45**, and 6 x 9 = **54**. Or as seen on a character sheet: 9/18/27/36/45/54. Which is a pretty potent bare hand attack; however, with a modified BCH of 29% it would be interesting to see if he could hit anything besides a wall and do more than tickle it. Time to get a skill bonus, Joe.

Grappling, Locks & Holds. Attacks such as grapple, leg-lock, and limb-twist are designed more to disable an opponent rather than damage an opponent. When a grapple successfully hits, the wrestler's opponent is said to be locked in it. From this position he or she may do nothing until broken free. This requires an action check of the Muscles, Reflexes or the Skill School of a Martial Art. The actions die strength needs to be greater than the die strength of the attack which set the grapple. If Shamrock has an orc guard in a leg lock (lucky orc!) which hit with a 56, the orc will be rendered helpless until a check can be made whose die roll is greater than 56.

On top of this, the attacker may inflict half the original damage of the attack every moment without having to re-roll the attack. Unfortunately, both a grappled and a grappling character while locked in a hold will defend with their **Prone Defense** against attacks from other characters (with the exception of the Leg Lock which leaves a grappler's arms free).

One Hand or Two or Three?

Most weapons are designed to be used with either two hands or one. What's the difference? Fifteen points of die strength per missing hand. If you use a two handed weapon with only 1 hand it is a -15 penalty. If you use some wierd alien three handed contraption with only 1 hand it is a -30. The reverse is not true. While using two hands with a one handed weapon does strengthen a blow, it is countered by the loss of accuracy and flexibility using just one hand brings.

Parrying Blows

Parrying is the use of ones attack to stop an opponent's attack from landing. It brings on a -20 penalty but it forces an opponent to take the attack's parry score as a penalty.

One thing which is important to realize while planning a character is that the PAR in the weapons table is not the PAR which will appear on ones character sheet. Instead it is the percentage of the BCH which will make up the attack's PAR. So if a weapon carries a decent 25% PAR its attack assertion this will amount to a -13 for someone with a BCH of 50% (or -19 for a BCH of 75%, or -25 for a BCH of 100%, etc...).

Multiple Parries. A character can parry until ones attack is guaranteed to run out of BCH. So a character with a 90% BCH with a sword attack can parry up to four times with that action. He will take a -80 penalty from all this parrying and only have 10% left to attack with (but at least he will be well defended!). These parries may be placed against four different attacks or placed all against one attack or any variation in between.

Parrying After the Fact cannot be done. If you have made your attack for the moment and did not think to declare a parry in advance (and take the -20 modifier) then the enemy has caught you off guard. You may not parry the attack and suck up the penalty in the next round.

Non-Melee Parrying Generally only specialized unarmed attacks (they say it in their Gamewise) may parry weapon attacks. And only in bad Ninja adventures and questionable Space Opera Prequels may melee attacks parry ranged attacks.

SOCIAL COMBAT

Typically, when characters converse in a game it is done with something akin to acting. Players impersonate their characters and talk around the table until a resolution is found. If this works – great – social combat is **not** for every situation. Social combat is good for breaking stalemates where no amount of power-mongering or player to player debate will change either character's mind....

> **Player as King:** Peasant, I am your king and I demand that you lower the drawbridge.
>
> **Director as Peasant:** Ah, go to blazes you overstuffed jolly of a chicken necked geek.
>
> **King:** What!? Has regallity no value!? The Vandals are soonth approaching now open the damn bridge!
>
> **Peasant:** Oh, hock nock far floozle you panty-waisted frock-coated ignorameous! I shall no sooner open the drawbridge then hack off my own head with a soup spoon. I'm on lunch! Phbbbbtt!
>
> **King:** Open the bridge now, peasant bastard, or I shall see to it that more things happen to your head than you could ever imagine! And with you still in it!
>
> **Peasant:** No.
>
> **King:** Yes!
>
> **Peasant:** No.
>
> **King:** Yes!
>
> **Peasant:** No.
>
> **King:** Yes!
>
> **(repeat infinitely)**

Social combat is bullying, seducing, fandangling, insulting, schmoozing and saying anything to get ones way — just like real life — but utilizing the character's charisma instead of the player's charisma to control the outcome. Hence the reason why it is also quite surprisingly quiet. Dice are rolled. What the characters actually say during the conversation is left to the imagination.

Unlike physical combat, social combat is used just as often between friends as it is between enemies and strangers, likewise social combat should not be immediately taken as an aggressive action. Physical combat settles disputes in the wilderness. Social combat settles matters in civilization.

THE SOCIAL COMBAT CONVERSATION

While real life conversations can fade in and out and carry on over years without ever coming to a solid conclusion, conversations in the ToAd are pointed structures with very definite beginnings and ends. This outline should seem familiar.

Before a Conversation Begins:

- **Declare a Suggestion:** The offense declares what they want the defense to do on winning the conversation. Please, use only one suggestion per character per conversation!

- **State a Level of Possibility:** The defense examines the suggestion and declares just how possible it is. This corresponds to the Susceptibility table on ones character sheet and provides the character with a defense score to use on the Effects Table.

- **Counter Suggest:** Since a lot of jaw flapping is bound to happen, the defending side of the conversation might want to make a counter-suggestion which the offense will slap with a level of possibility. Cease & Desist is a favorite.

During a Moment of Conversation:

- **Initiative:** If needed, characters compare mints (mental initiative) to see who goes first.

- **Attack:** The offense rolls the percentile dice hoping to roll equal to or under a social combat skill (Intimidate, Schmooze, Fandangle, Seduce, etc...). If none are available, raw Charisma will do. A successful the die roll grabs a column on the Effects Table. The defender's susceptibility takes a row. Where the two intersect determines the effect of the attack.

- **Damage is Done:** The attacker decides on the damage to be done: Slam, Stack, or Diss. Any damage done by Dissing is immediately recorded.

- **End of the Attack:** If the offense has scored an Excellent effect then the conversation is over. Otherwise, the defender gets to counter attack and the conversation continues.

The Aftermath:

- **After a Suggestion has been scored:** the loser of the conversation must "cease & desist" and set about carrying out the suggestion.

MAKING A SUGGESTION & LEVELS OF POSSIBILITY

A suggestion can be anything from "please pass the Grey Poupon" to "get naked and jump in the nearest snowbank" to "get naked and jump in the nearest volcano." As can be expected not all suggestions are going to be taken as lightly as others which is why every conversation begins with the defender slapping a level of possibility on it. Also known as "Susceptibility," these defense numbers depend on a character's Fortitude, Intuition, and Stability. On a character sheet they look like this.

Susceptibility	Possible	Impossible	Ridiculous	Out of the Question	Adsurb!
Defense	25	50	100	150	200

What keeps a defender from immediately jumping to the **Adsurb!** Level for the best protection possible is the trade-off with loyalty which comes from losing at a high level of possibility. Basically, the loser is so amazed he or she lost the conversation that they stand convinced the suggestion was a good idea to begin with (get naked and jump in a big vat of Grey Poupon? Sounds Lovely!).

Level of Possibility	Loyalty to a Suggestion	Metaphorical State of Servitude
Possible	Followed but with major word play. A "bail out" check is allowed.	Lying Snake
Impossible	Committed, but with major word play.	Leprechaun
Ridiculous	Committed, but with minor word play.	Djinni
Out of the Question	The suggestion is performed without question or deception; however, a convinced character may be talked out of it.	Old Yeller
Adsurb!	The suggestion will be carried out exactly as desired with no chance of escape.	Brainwashed Cult Member

Cease & Desist. This comes from far too many suggestions which end with "...and then shut up and go away." Basically, cease & desist is an unspoken agreement to bring an immediate end to a conversation once a suggestion has been scored. The round of combat will be allowed to finish itself up but there will be no more conversations on the matter until after the suggestion is carried out.

RANGE

Unlike physical combat, social combat has no sense of range. At best a Director might apply a modifier based on setting, distance, method of communication and distraction. For example: social combat where opponents are yards apart and yelling at each other against the roaring clatter of a subway train might give both sides a penalty. However if the characters are someplace quiet and talking on a phone — even though half a world away — they may recieve no penalty whatsoever.

DOING DAMAGE

When a social attack hits it makes itself known through one of three kinds of damage: Slam, Stack, or Diss. No matter which one you choose the following table will be important.

Effect	Failure	Little	Good	Average	Intense	Terrific	Excellent
Outcome	-5	0	5	10	15	20	Success!

Slam. Have you ever developed a sudden headache while talking someone? This is Slamming in action. Basically it does the outcome of the table above in mixed fortitude damage, meaning that – yes – with an intense effect or better it does 1 wound of mental damage. Slamming has no practical purpose to it, but it is something people do and so it is here. If not looking to do anything but make someone miserable, the Excellent level does 25 points of fortitude damage.

Stack. Suggestions are scored with Excellent effects. Stack takes the outcome of an action as a bonus to all further attacks that support the suggestion. These bonuses stack on top of each other. For example: if in the first moment a Good Effect is scored, a +5 Stack bonus is gained for the rest of the conversation. In the next moment, an Average Effect brings the stack up to +15. In the third moment, failure results (from the Effects table or a missed die roll) and the stack drops back to +10.

Diss. Dissing is Stack in reverse. It uses the same table but removes the bonus from an opponent's stack and may even incur a penalty. If a Terrific effect is dissed on an opponent who has a +25 stack, that stack will drop down to +5.

FAILURE

Missing an attack or scoring a Failing effect automatically puts a -5 penalty on the attacker's stack, no matter if the combatant planned to use Slam, Stack or Diss.

MIXING PHYSICAL & SOCIAL COMBAT

Social combat and physical combat do mix – in theory at least. Diplomacy always seems to get the heavy spikey end of the morning star when the two come together. The problem is that talking is slow, and social combat should be treated like a clunky crossbow which takes ten rounds (20 seconds) to reload and fire. So if looking to duke it out with both words and whistling sabers ala The Three Musketteers, be prepared to parry a lot.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

As a long history of war can testify, not speaking a similiar language hinders diplomacy. If a language barrier exists then either an attempt to communicate can be made by the characters using an initial check of a foreign language skill or a mute **-50** penalty is taken by all parties.

If either side manages to break the language barrier then only an awkwardness penalty is taken, one equal to **50 minus the die roll**.

Faking a Language Barrier. This can be done, but it's a bit counter productive. The faker cannot counter attack and so long as they can hear the words being spoken, they will be attacked as usual.

Creating a Language Barrier. This is more effective. Whether it's a kid screaming "LA! LA! LA! LA! LA! I CAN'T HEAR YOU!" so as not to hear somebody (BTW, this technique drains 1 point of Fort per moment), or an orc slamming the door in the face of a girl scout selling cookies, or someone simply walking away from a conversation – so long as it physically interrupts communication the conversation cannot continue. Which is why 1-sided conversations are rare. Typically, people will not waste their time with talk from which they have nothing to gain.

SOCIAL COMBAT EXTRAS

This is an alphabetical listing of social combat rarities which occasionally come into play.

BAILING OUT

For those who lost under the Possible level, bailing out is one check of the character's current Fortitude. If successful it allows the character to simply ditch the suggestion. This check may be made at any time but only once and only while away from the presence of the character who scored the suggestion.

CHANGING ONES MIND

During a conversation it might be tempting to change suggestions, possibility levels or a social combat skill. With the exception of social combat skills, the running advice is – don't do it!

Changing Social Combat Skills is easier than switching weapons in physical combat. It simply happens and incurs no penalties.

Changing Possibility Levels can only be done if either the attacker has changed suggestions or the bump possibility side effect has come into play. Otherwise it is set for the length of the conversation.

Changing Suggestions is highly **not** recommended. It takes a round of combat, allows an opponent to reset their possibility level and strips away any stacked bonuses gained while leaving in place all stacked penalties. It also ticks off other players at the game table. Often a new suggestion is best be saved for some other conversation.

DEPROGRAMMING

After a conversation there is nothing stopping other characters from using social combat to stop a convinced character from completing a suggestion. However, the convinced character will helplessly defend the original suggestion **at the same level of possibility** he or she lost to – actively and enthusiastically – even if this means having a director temporarily take the character out of the hands of its player and playing it like a creature until the conversation is over. If the original level of possibility cannot be remembered then Adsurb! Is used.

WORKING A CROWD

One advantage of social combat over physical combat is that it can be equally applied against one person as well as a 1,000 people. To some degree it is even easier. When faced with a crowd, if some strong willed person does not step forward to represent them, the most perfectly average person in the crowd should be used to defend against the speaker. This person, by not truly being engaged in the conversation, cannot make a counter suggestion any greater than cease and desist.

Should the speaker win against the crowd, they all need to carry out the suggestion yet – since they were not directly addressed – they will do so at one possibility level less than was scored. For example, if the crowd thought the suggestion was out of the question their loyalty to it will be at the ridiculous level.

BATTLEBOARD

A Battleboard is a map and Battleboard Combat is a kind of play where a map is used in conjunction with miniature figurines and the Battleboard Speed-O-Meter to remove much of basic combat's guestimation about speed and distance. Battleboard combat is not necessarily better than basic combat (it runs slower and takes more time to set up) yet battleboard combat generally feels more balanced than basic combat.

THE MAP

Battleboard maps are made with large square (or hexagonal) graph paper where each square represents one step of distance and is big enough to hold the base of a standard miniature. Hobby supply shops often sell them with a plastic covering so they can be drawn on with magic markers and easily erased. For every step a character takes his or her playing piece moves forward one square.

To count the distance between two characters, start with the step in front of the character and end with the step the other character occupies. The step the character occupies is known as Step 0 and does not count. Characters standing in adjacent squares are considered to be 1 step apart. Characters occupying the same square are 0 steps apart. When a straight line cannot be drawn between two characters the shortest possible path is used to decide how far apart they are.

RANGE

With battleboard combat range is taken into account at the same time as initiative, right before the dice are rolled.

Melee Weapon Range. Where in basic combat the longest weapon hits first on the initial strike, in battleboard combat a melee weapon either reaches an opponent or it does not. A melee attack has its range rounded off to the number of steps it represents (1 step = 36 inches), and if this can reach into the step an opponent occupies then it can be used otherwise it cannot. There are no first strike provisions in battleboard combat. .

Missile Weapon Range. Missile weapon range does not change in battleboard combat, it simply becomes more exact. The distance between a shooter and target is divided by the attack's range to create a modifier.

> Hamstead is standing 10 steps away from Zitto and looking to turn him into a pin cushion with his bow. His Short Bow's range of 2 puts a -5 penalty on the shot (10 / 2 = 5). If using a throwing knife with a range of 0.5, this would create a –20 penalty (10 / 0.5 = 20, or –2 per step). A Long Bow with a range of 4 would only take a -2 penalty.

Since dividing by decimals is never fun, it is often easier to think of r0.25 = –4 per step, r0.50 = –2 per step, r1 = -1 per step, r2 = -1 for every 2 steps, r3 = -1 for every 3 steps, r4 = -1 for every 4 steps, etc....

Just be sure to remember that the distance between two targets starts with the step in front of the shooter and ends with the step the target is standing in.

MOVEMENT & INSTANTS

In basic combat, movement happens and then combat happens (if movement is even given the time of day). On a Battleboard, movement and combat happen simultaneously. Characters and creatures fight when they are in the best position to do so. However, they still only get 1 action per round.

To control all of this movement the round is broken down into five Instants. The Battleboard Speed-O-Meter compares the speed a character is traveling to the instant the round is in and tells the character whether or not movement is possible during that moment and by how much. Characters cannot move during instants marked with an X.

Characters	SPM	Mod	1	2	3	4	5
	1	0	X	X	1	X	X
	2	0	X	1	X	1	X
Zitto	3	0	1	X	1	X	1
	4	0	1	X	1	1	1
	5	-5	1	1	1	1	1
Joe	6	-5	1	1	2	1	1
	7	-5	1	2	1	2	1
Shamrock	8	-5	2	1	2	1	2
	9	-10	2	1	2	2	2
	10	-10	2	2	2	2	2
	11	-10	2	2	3	2	2
	12	-10	2	3	2	3	2
	13	-15	3	2	3	2	3

Each round is broken up into five instants. All three characters in the table declare their movement speed for the moment. In the first instant Zitto and Joe get to move their figures 1 square, Shamrock moves 2. In the second instant Zitto does not get to move, but Joe and Shamrock get to move 1 square, and so on.....

Mod This column is the die strength modifier which applies to all characters trying to target the moving character. If Zitto was trying to throw or stab a dagger at Shamrock his attack would take a -5 because she is moving with a decent speed.

SIMPLIFIED BATTLEBOARD MOVEMENT

If everyone agrees to it, there is no reason why the Battleboard cannot go without the Speed-O-Meter in order to speed a game up. The Meter tends to work fine with a small number of characters, but doing it with a cave full of kobolds could take forever. In such a case, everyone moves their limit across the map and combat commences from there.

WINNING

It's been written so many times it has become a cliché, "there are no winners or losers in role playing games." This – of course – is a complete lie. There are very definite winners and losers in role playing games, yet the matter has very little to do with whether a favorite character or creature lives or dies. Remember that the book opened with one supreme rule: What seems real is real. Not mentioned at that point were two other rules which closely follow: The director is always right. And: If you don't like it then leave.

The director is always right. This is the ToAd's protection against rule lawyers. Everything written in the books and recorded in the databases do not amount to squat against what a Director has working in his or her head. Directors often have very good reasons for bending the rules or pushing a party's fate one way or another. When they don't then….

If you don't like it then leave. This is the player's protection against a corrupt Director's privilege. We do not mean sulking through the rest of the game then quietly bailing out later in the week. Pack up your stuff and leave in a storm. It will make a good impression on those left behind.

What do these have to do with winning a game? It's not just the ToAd, it's all role playing games. At the end of the night, these are won when the people playing it are eager to return and do it again. A game is lost when it falls into squabbling and nobody wants anything to do with it ever again. Everybody wins or everyone loses. And that is the way it is.

A GAME IS WON WHEN THE ADVENTURERS NEVER WANT TO STOP ADVENTURING

DIRECTING

Directors create the world adventurers explore. They play the roles of nearly everything the players meet and control the physics of everything the players do. The trick to directing is to pre-plan before the game. Read an adventure from cover to cover. Familiarize yourself with the maps. Get on the computer and make sure all the necessary creature sheets and tables have been printed out and stapled together. Treat the adventure as if it were a trip overseas that you are running. Learn as much as you can about the destination and even create what you feel it is lacking (currency, traditions, holidays, etc.)

And then wing it, but not in a way which seems like you are winging it. Adventures are suggestions at best. Rules are not written in stone. While it may be wise to not bend the rules too often (consistency is a virtue), many a great game has been saved by sublime fudging on the part of a director.

Most of all, have fun. Even though the position of Director is synonymous with RPG martyr this does not ban you from enjoying yourself. Try breaking free from the convention of having only 1 Game Master per game. While verboten in other games, in the ToAd it is actually recommended to have at least 1 director per 4 players.

As a Director you are:

- 🖤 A Storyteller.
- 🖤 A Friend.
- 🖤 An Opponent.
- 🖤 A Judge.
- 🖤 Some kind of God.

As a Director you are not:

- 💥 A Player of Favorites.
- 💥 Overly Generous.
- 💥 Stingy.
- 💥 A Meat Grinder.
- 💥 Some kind of God.

BARRY MANILOW

CASTING

Assuming that your players are the good guys in this adventure, it is up to you to produce a loved yet hated and fearsome collection of bad guys for the adventure. While as individuals they may come with a thousand different faces, a team of adversaries can usually be broken down into three groups: lackeys, cronies and kingpins.

LACKEYS

These are often the weakest and most numerous creatures in your cast of bad guys. When running Lackeys it is advisable to create one quick Cannonfodder style character sheet and then make a few hundred copies of it. Limit the creature to the function it performs. If its main purpose is to hold a character's sword in its belly, only about an inch of paper is needed.

> **Arggh!, Kobold Guard**
> Wnds: 5   Current Vit: 40   Total Defense: 30
> Spear: Spd:15 | Rng: 60 | BCH: 40% | PAR: -15 | Lgaite: 12/ 30/ 30/ 30/ 50 sharp.

If armies of lackeys are more your style, try building a battle roster, a table of statistics where one creature occupies each line. Scrap Current Vit and use only the creature's wound count. Eliminate parrying as an option. However, do not let the players onto the fact that the creature they have encountered is an ability stunted generic. It might even be wise to keep one full fledged creature sheet in reserve for the occasional kobold guard who refuses to die and rises up to become a major personality in the adventure. This is how the sample character Samurai Joe came about. The dice were so eager to spare this one goblin guard we had to turn him into a personality.

CRONIES

Cronies are half-characters. Out of the interest of challenge they should be flushed out with special skills, talents, assertions and such. They should also be given the same options as player characters and occupy interesting and important positions in a game.

Cronies make good stand-ins and red herrings to help protect the man or woman at the top of the villainous ladder, namely the king-pin.

KING-PINS

These masterminds should be well-developed, fully flushed-out characters with personalities, plans and possible futures. Kingpins should never die easy, if at all. A seemingly invulnerable yet not all-powerful King-pin will become your campaign's best friend.

EVERYBODY ELSE

Outside of this gang be sure to keep extra creatures on hand whose main purpose is to keep the story interesting. Nothing makes an adventure more complex than a cast of lovable personalities whose loyalty is not unfounded yet simply hard to find. Realize that all characters have lives that often have very little to do with the adventure at hand. Think Han Solo in the first Star Wars. Whether he would decide to support the rebellion became considerably more interesting than Luke's mission to defeat the Death Star.

Good vs. Evil

Unlike other games, there is no titanic struggle of good vs. evil in the ToAd. On the whole there are only creatures trying to prosper and survive, often by hacking each other up with irresponsible candor. While the terms good guys and bad guys have been used for the matter of easy understanding, do not feel obliged to turn every adventure into a struggle of good vs. evil, better known as us vs. them. Often some of the most entertaining adventures revolve around figuring out what to do to keep a good guy/bad guy separation from arising between otherwise friendly creatures.

SETTING

Just as much as players like to get caught up in the story of an adventure, they also like to explore new places. It is up to the director to make it seem as if an actual place is being explored.

Start with Some Maps, End with Your Imagination

Simple maps. The more detailed a map is the less fun it tends to be. Let your imagination fill in the blanks. Occasionally take notes to remain consistent.

When it comes to describing places, the ToAd uses flexible units of space & time not just to accommodate miniatures on a battle board but also to get the game to work better with the human imagination. Four steps is easier to visualize than ten feet. The best way to describe anything is with metaphor and simile. Eyes start to glaze over as characters pass through a succession of rooms described as "forty feet long, ten feet wide and eighteen feet high, with a roof supported by pillars evenly spaced at every three feet." However, to say "it's like a ballroom made for elephants with arches reaching almost beyond the sky," is to really say something.

The only time you may want to churn out a detailed map is when drawing up a battleboard. These are large representations of areas in which a battle is planned, one so pivotal the matters of range and movement are considered important. If a room is every so important your players need to know its exact dimensions, then a battleboard should be used.

Describing Things

Rooms are not the only things which will need meaty descriptions in order to stick. Every physical sensation the characters perceive will need some words to drive the point home. Do not be afraid to overdo it (people forget quickly and fun had at your expense is still fun). Be informative as well as decorative. Do not be afraid of venturing beyond sight and sound. In our age of video desensitization nothing sparks the imagination like a reference to a smell, touch or taste. While it is often best to let the players create their own responses to a character's situation, sometimes it does not hurt to momentarily take control of a character and give it the desired response – even if this means putting words in his or her mouth.

Whatever you do, do not refer to areas by their adventure coordinates, such as Room 10b or Encounter F. This is a game, not a modern art exhibit. After an area has been encountered, if it was a good one then a nickname will ultimately arise, even if it is no more thrilling than "the room where Steve bit it." Use nicknames for rooms whenever possible.

Try to avoid using stock names for things such as goblins, giant hamsters, or +50 swords. The people and things characters encounter will be expected to have lives beyond the dungeon. Like real people they will have a whole scheme of desires and values that causes goblins to be called the tribe of the blackened hand, giant hamsters grunt puppies, and one's prized +25 sword the Zazzletaz.

If you have a hard time coming up with good names for things, investigate what is known as poetic technique: the use of assonance, consonance, alliteration, rhyme and metering – all of which are designed to make a loose collection of words seem like a solid name.

GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS

As with maps, the more exacting a graphic illustration is the less effective it becomes. One of the primary reasons PPD role playing games have managed to persist despite the visceral flood of computer gaming is because not a single graphics card on the market is quicker than the human imagination when positively charged. The imagination provides the viewer with exactly what he or she wants see and with just the right level of questionable content (blood, gore, gloom, bulging pecs & bare glutes etc…), and all with blazing speed!

Despite the unholy alliance of role playing games and comic books, to run a successful adventure the absolute last thing you want are photo-realistic representations of what is actually happening. Even if you possess some artistic talent, shoot for representations of what a character or creature thinks they saw and not an exact replica. Otherwise, stick with words. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but unless you have a definite knack for the graphic arts then only the wrong words will be said (or maybe just 6 words: duh, is that squiggle an orc?)

Let the players use their imaginations, that's what it's for.

LIGHTS, SOUNDS, FAKE BLOOD AND OTHER PROPS

A matter of personal preference. Many enjoy this kind of chicanery, others find it to be tedious, juvenile, domineering, time wasting, and more than a little self-indulgent on the part of the Director — unless of course it is, like, really cool.

Throwing an angry ferret on someone to show how the spell Bouquet of Ferrets works or anything along those lines is highly discouraged.

FOOD

Food good. Food very good. Bring food to me. Now.

STORIES

Most games go wrong because of the common misconception that the director creates the story. A bad director herds players from one encounter to another, leaving them feeling about as in control of the situation as a kid on a roller coaster. It starts off fun but grows tedious after an hour or two. The trick to creating an exciting story line is to let the players do the work. Set up a situation. Populate the world with antagonists concocting elaborate and daring plans for world domination, and then let the players think up ways of dealing with it. In the dance of an adventure, always let the players lead.

MYSTERY

Ever wonder what keeps a good book from being put down? The answer is not a mystery, it is mystery. Not "Colonel Mustard did it with a candlestick in the library" style mystery, but the simple intrigue of what one character or another will do next, where all of this is leading, and how will the world react to what the players are doing now. A lack of mystery is why "shopping mall" dungeon adventures so often fail. Adventurers go room to room hacking up its inhabitants and no one living there seems to care. The players know they will eventually either die or leave the place with a big bag of booty, but so what? What does it matter? Why is this haunted keep even here in the first place? Where's the mystery?

Making mystery is not hard. You simply concoct a straight forward situation and then tell the players just enough about it to get them moving. When players ask questions don't give them the answers but point their characters in the direction of an answer, dropping clues along the way. Never say, "Listen up this is important.... " Instead use the trick writers use – control your use of description. When the characters seem to be wandering off on an irredeemable tangent, let the descriptions pale and stale. When they are onto something that matters, get out the Dickens and begin describing for the five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell).

CLIFFHANGERS

A session is a night of adventure, it ends because the group has run out of time. Traditionally directors stop their sessions just after a pivotal encounter. Take a hint from the cliff-hangers of yore and stop it just before something big happens, just as the characters open a creaking oak door to find themselves staring straight into the fiery eyes of a –

This will not only make it easier for everyone to remember their places and quickly jump back into the game, but it will keep your players eager to play again and ready to make the provisions needed for another night off.

BRAVADO

Lastly, never forget that the ToAd is an Adventure game. The medium does not work well with the stiff reserve and quiet complacency of a Henry James novel. Adventures in the ToAd are the stuff of daydreams and nightmares. Mankind developed an imagination so we could figure our way out of trouble before getting into it – always give your players some trouble to get into!

PRE-MADE ADVENTURES

Quite possibly one of the coolest aspects of the ToAd's system is the ICE's Adventure Center. In the past, to build an adventure one spent days, sometimes even weeks looking through books and busting ones fingers retyping stats from various manuals. And for what? You play it once with your friends and then it all disappears into the back of ones desk - never to be seen again. With the Adventure Center, not only can a director quickly click together an adventure using stuff from the ICE's databases, but the Adventure Center generates a webpage which is standardized to the task of adventuring and can easily be put online to share with the world, or even ported over to a print on demand publisher and sold (royalty-free!) to other directors!

While all of this is covered online at the website, A few details about the standardization of pre-made adventures will be covered here – if only to spare some trees from being pulped into the requisite two pages of boredom old adventure modules began with which explained how it was to be used.

1.) Encounter Title

> No matter how an adventure is designed, the Adventure Center breaks it up into a series of encounters. Typically they start with an encounter title, then some text in a box (like this box) which is to be read to the players, and then some notes in normal print that are meant for the director's eyes only.
>
> Encounter Titles are typically printed big and bold and numbered to match either a point on a map, a place in a timeline, or simply a sequence of events.

In the director's notes of an encounter can be anything, pictures, text, etc.... However, one of its most notable devices is a pair of tables called a battle roster. These are generated from actual characters, however they have been drastically scaled down to the purpose of physical combat. The idea is that you actually mark these tables up, keeping track of the creatures wear and tear damage, etc....

ID	Name	Defense	MW	Fort	PW	Vit	Conc.	Exer.	Move	Wt.	SI
0	Orc Commander	t100 g0 s68 p68	8:	50:	22:	70:	+11	+13	w5 j2 cl2 run10 spr15	246	1
1	Orc Guard	t81 g0 s61 p61	6:	35:	16:	60:	+8	+10	w4 j1 cl1 run8 spr12	180	1

On this first table we have the creatures stats. In this case, an orc commander and one orc guard. Since battle rosters often used duplicates of generic creatures (such as the orc commander), ID numbers are generated to keep track of who is who. Under **Defense**, the first letter of the kind of defense is used to identify it (**t** = total defense, **g** = grab defense, **s** = surprise defense, **p** = prone defense). **MW** and **PW** stand for mental and physical wounds, respectively. **Move** is similar to Defense, only using the first letter of each form of movement (with the exception of sprint and run, which get **spr** and **run**). Our orc commander can walk 5, jump 2, climb 2, run 10, and sprint 15 steps per moment. **Wt**. Is the total weight of the creature, baggage and all. **SI** is the creature's size index.

Name	Assertion	Skill	Spd	BCH	PAR	L	G	A	I	T	E	RNG
Orc Commander	Crossbow, Heavy	Crossbows	2	66%	-0	10^1	20^2	40^4	60^6	80^8	106^{10}	r3
Orc Commander	Sword, Bastard	Heavy Swords	5	103%	-24	12^1	25^2	45^4	70^7	105^{10}	140^{14}	44"
Orc Commander	Sword, Bastard	Trip Attack	5	83%	-19	12^1	25^2	45^4	70^7	105^{10}	140^{14}	44"
Orc Guard	Crossbow, Light	Quiet Strike	3	96%	-0	10^1	20^2	30^3	40^4	50^5	66^6	r2
Orc Guard	Crossbow, Light	Crossbows	3	56%	-0	10^1	20^2	30^3	40^4	50^5	66^6	r2
Orc Guard	Sword, Long	Swords and Clubs	3	66%	-17	10^1	20^2	40^4	60^6	90^9	120^{12}	49"

The second table is a list of assertions similar to what one might find on a character sheet. Note that the names match the names in the stat's table. In order to save space, duplicate assertions will not be made for duplicate characters. Even if this encounter had 100 orc guards in it, the assertions table would still look like this.

Occassionally, a piece of equipment will pop up on the end of an encounter. These appear in detail tables like the following. This "piece of equipment" is nothing a character will want to pocket, it is actually a trap, the maximum damage one can take from a fall (appx: 300 feet). Basically, any character unlucky enough to take this plummet would put their durability on the effects table, measure it against an offensive strength of 80 and take damage according to the big ugly numbers separated with slashes. The lgaite entry stands for physical damage done, little/good/average/intense/terrific/excellent. Against someone with a durability of 50 this fall would do Intense damage, and thus 500 points of Vitality and 25 wounds. Youch! Not the Dt:Bt. This means the damage type is blunt, like a side walk. If our hapless character were to hit some grass, he would only take impact damage, 500 vit and 17 wounds. Against water or bushes he might take no wound damage at all!

Name	Details
Fall, 100 Steps - Max	**Weapon** Lgaite:200^{10}/300^{15}/400^{20}/500^{25}/600^{30}/700^{35} Dt:Bt Rng: Wt:0
	Gamewise: Offense: 80 Die Strength. Defense: Durability.

Lastly, encounters which are occupied by large or important characters contain a silver shaded inhabitants list. These point to automatically generated character sheets tacked on to the very end of the module.

Inhabitants: Baaz, Magmamite, Princess Clarissa

In this case we have three characters, an alpine dragon called Baaz, a big lava spewing beetle known as a Magmamite, and an NPC Princess Clarissa. No matter how many times a character is listed as an inhabitant, only one character sheet per character will appear at the end of the module.

On the following page is Baaz's character sheet. It uses many of the same conventions of the battle roster (Defense, Movement, Lgaite).

And lastly, at the very end of the adventure are all the gamewises and lgaites used by the different characters in the adventure – just so you don't have to go searching through the rule books. Not sure what something does? Look there first!

Baaz.
9th level Wizard.
Dragon, Alpine.

Defense: t60 g0 s60 p60

Fort: 70   Know: 65   Char: 60   Intu: 80   Stab: 50

Vit: 70   Mus: 60   Phy: 50   Ref: 60   Dur: 90

Current Fort: 70

Current Vit: 840

Mental Wounds: 9

Physical Wounds: 132

Mental Rege: 5 Fort per Minute. 1 Wounds per Day.

Physical Rege: 21 Vit per Minute. 5 Wounds per Day.

Conc: +15 | Exer: +15 | Mint: 22 | Pint: 20 | **Size: 12 | Reach: 12' 4" |** Body Wt: 20,220 lbs. | Wt Carried: 264 lbs. | Food: 142 lbs. |
Current Movement: w7 j7 f6 sw6 cg5 run14 spr29

Preoccupations: Befriend 54%. Bite 75%. Breathe 77%. Claw 77%. Erythinaeus 83%. History 66%. Philosophy 72%.

Talents: Camouflage, Static 30%. Cold Proof 20%. Eagle-eyes 20%. Fire Proof 30%. Infravision 40%. Psychogenetic Supercharger 30%. Supranatural Affinity 1%.

Troubles: Altruism 15%.

Assertions	Power	Spd	BCH	Par	L	G	A	I	T	E	DT	Rng	Bns
Breath, Flaming Lance	Breathe	4	77%	-0	253^{12}	505^{25}	758^{37}	1011^{50}	1263^{63}	1516^{75}	Fi	r0.25	
Jaws, Reptilian Sharp	Bite	12	75%	-4	122^{8}	245^{16}	367^{24}	489^{32}	611^{40}	734^{48}	Mx	163"	
Talons, Reptilian	Claw	12	77%	-12	122^{8}	245^{16}	367^{24}	489^{32}	611^{40}	734^{48}	Mx	152"	
General Attack	Abilities	5	53%	-5	41^{2}	82^{4}	122^{6}	163^{8}	204^{10}	245^{12}	Bt	148"	

Spell	School	Spd	BCH	PAR	Lgaite	Rng	Toll	Time
Bless	Erythinaeus	11	30%	-0		r1	1-10 Sharp Fort	Instantaneous
Heal	Erythinaeus	6	55%	-0	$16^{0}/32^{1}/48^{2}/64^{3}/80^{4}/96^{4}$	r0.25	2-20 Sharp Fort	instantaneous
Sunburst	Erythinaeus	21	60%	-0	$18^{1}/36^{2}/54^{3}/72^{4}/90^{6}/108^{7}$	r3	9 vit	instantaneous
Telescope	Erythinaeus	5	60%	-0			5 fort per minute	instantaneous
Transmogrify	Erythinaeus	6	40%	-0		r0.25	4-40 Mixed Vit	4 moments
Zonk	Erythinaeus	20	65%	-0		r2	2 fort	instantaneous
Psychic Armor	Erythinaeus	12	45%	-0			1 Fort per moment.	instantaneous

Succeptibility	Possible	Impossible	Ridiculous	OOTQ	Adsurb!
Defense	33	66	99	132	165

Details

- **Story Role** Player Character
- **Personal Inclination** Neutral Good
- **Social Inclination** Violent Neutral
- **Handness** Right
- **Zodiac Sign** Pegasus
- **Created By** EyeintheSky
- **Complete** Yes
- **Approved** Yes

RUNNING AN ADVENTURE

How well do you know your friends? In the end this will be the sole determining factor of how you run an adventure. People play to be entertained and while the directors often seem to be actively working against their players do not confuse your own ambitions with those of the creatures you are running. As a director your primary goal is to make sure everyone (including yourself) is having such a good time they will want to do it again sometime.

Rules – When in Doubt, Leave them Out

The prime arch-evil enemy of all gaming is actually its defining principle: **the Rules**. Far too many adventures have ended prematurely because two bull-headed players have found that they would rather spend the night shouting at each other over what the rules say about this that or the other thing rather than actually adventuring (during my teenage years I once even witnessed a disgruntled parent threaten to call the cops if a pair of rules lawyers didn't quiet down).

If a game comes to a screeching halt because it cannot be remembered whether an obscure line of text in some book or another allows for something ridiculous then let it slide. Later on, print out on large cards the phrases: **What Seems Real Is Real**. and **The Director Has the Final Say**. Hold them over your head if the shouting becomes too loud for you to orchestrate a read along. Create duplicates just in case they get ripped to pieces. Do not go to the rule books and ruin the night for the rest of the group by placating some hot-headed whiner with lost time. Make stuff up if necessary. Always keep the adventure rolling forward.

Killing Off Characters

Let the dice take the blame. For this same reason, **never hide your die rolls!** Work the storyline to help out the players but only when absolutely necessary. Never, absolutely never, key the ignition to the Deus Ex Machina and blatantly save or destroy a certain character. If a comet drops out of the sky to smack a thunder giant in the back of the head, and save a bruised party, the comet had better contain the egg of a creature looking to grow larger and more destructive than Godzilla once it gets the chance.

When a character does die, immediately set about concocting a way to bring the player back into the game. If the player is running more than one character there is no problem, otherwise a new character should be provided and credibly worked into the storyline. Work the new character as an NPC until you can safely hand it over to the player.

REWARDING YOUR PLAYERS

The greatest reward you can give your players is an interesting night of gaming. Even dead characters will profit from this as it causes their players to come back for more. Unfortunately, from the get-go of role playing games, a maxim has been set which seems to dictate that no adventure is complete without breaking into some monster's horde of treasure, loading up with magical items, and springing free from the caves of doom (evil, chaos, elemental higgledy-piggledy, etc.) as a more powerful person than the one who went in. The problem with this arises from having treasure-hunting outshine the rewards of participating in a story-based adventure. While power and money can provide a stunning sugar high, a crash is always soon to follow. As soon as your players start to anticipate an imaginary payoff like factory workers looking forward

to Friday's paycheck then the game might as well be over. Like reading a novel, gaming is not work, but it easily can become a chore if the interest in the story is not there.

Which is not to say that the richness of the material world should be heeded with an stringent Amish suspicion. In fact, there is no better way to mess with players than through the matters of treasure, magical items and personal advancement.

TREASURE

Everyone loves treasure, too bad dungeons don't come with ATM's and bank deposit drop slots. While few eyes do not sparkle in the presence of gold, treasure should be as it is: more a liability than an asset. All treasure has a jealous and possessive owner of some kind; otherwise, it would not be treasure. Most of it is heavy and hard to transport. It attracts attention. There is not a tax collector in the universe who wouldn't be interested in a wheelbarrow full of gold.

MAGICAL ITEMS

The term Magical Items is used loosely in the ToAd. While it certainly applies to anything made better (or worse) through magic, it also applies to anything special enough to not be readily available on the open market. The term encompasses things which players simply cannot buy for their characters unless they encounter someone selling it in an adventure. Although no magic may be used by a high-tech Maser Blaster, it might still be listed as a magical item since it is not for sale at Mallwart.

Of course, the reason Magical Items are not up for easy purchase is that they tend to make life far too easy for the characters who possess them. Be sure to rig magical items with complications. While magical armor may necessarily expand and contract to fit whoever wears it, remember that it can be damaged just as easily as normal armor (more importantly remind your players of the matter). Magical swords which shimmer with a golden light are loved by thieves. Wands, rods and staves often come without instruction manuals, energy indicators to tell how many charges they have left, or even an arrow to indicate which pointy end the firebolts shoot from. Any wizard who does not take the time to booby-trap his favorite focusing device is not worth a bad future in pig entrails.

Most of all, do not let too many magical items enter the game at one time. How can you let a character's glimmering and sparkling doohickeys make their lives miserable if you cannot keep track of what it is they have?

PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT

Traditionally an almost idiotic method of handing out experience points for creatures killed has presided over RPG's. All monsters carried a theoretical bounty on their heads which was handed over to whoever dealt the killing blow. Not only did this blind a game to any possible action besides killing everything in sight but it also rewarded those who were conniving enough hold back from combat until the very last moment and then step in to steal another character's battle.

The ToAd is not a paper-based arcade game. It does not give characters points for killing things. On the whole, the race for ePs is a silly one. Rising through the intensity levels often amounts to more challenging situations, not easier ones. If a player does not know how to effectively invest effort at the 2nd level they will be in twice the trouble on reaching 12th level. Feel free to simply tell players to advance their characters 1 level for the next adventure. They'll thank you, God only knows why.

Irish Luck, Cat Life, and Supercharger Coins

This great idea came from a game master friend of mine who found that it was better to reward the players than their characters. He gave out plastic gold pirate coins which were worth 1 re-roll of the dice each (this is what inspired the talent Irish Luck). Like a safety net these coins allowed our low level characters to take on much greater threats than the typical skeletons and rats – but more importantly it provided the added tension of deciding whether a situation was worth one of our precious coins. On top of this, unlike giving the characters oodles of magical items, the coins always ran out. They did not stick around like a vorpal sword, allowing everything and anything to be easily sliced in twain.

Feel free to get out a set of poker chips and have the blues (or greens) represent Irish Luck re-rolls, the reds Cat Lives, and the whites +10 Psychogenetic Superchargers (all of these are talents explained online). Or better yet, go to costume shop and buy some fake gold, silver and copper coins.

Just be sure to up the power of your adversaries to meet the character's new might. While this kind of treasure does eventually disappear, a character with 300 Cat Lives might as well be invincible.

SAMPLE ADVENTURE

Setup: Carl the Conqueror, Rasberry Roane, Shamrock, and Samurai Joe are sneaking through a cave running up the side of an orc fortress. They have come upon a fissure which seems to drop hundreds of feet into a sharp mess of jagged rock. It is a four step leap to the other side. Rasberry, Shamrock, and Joe all have jump speeds of 3 steps per moment and will take a -20. Carl can only jump two steps and will take a -40. Because it is damp and dark in the cave, the Director has stated that the jump will defend with a strength of 20. (A bird's eye view is given in paranthesis)

Carl: I can't do it.

Everyone Else: Sure you can!

Rasberry: I tie a rope around Carl's waist and tell him that all three of us will hold onto it, and if he doesn't make it we will catch him before he falls too far.

Carl: I won't do it.

Shamrock: I commit Social Combat and try to Sweet Talk him into doing it.

Carl: Ridiculous. And I am going to Aggravate you into giving up the idea and head back

Shamrock. Equally Ridiculous. (Shamrock has a higher mint than Carl and rolls first, trying to beat an 89%. She rolls a 62. Against Carl's Ridiculous defense of 84 this creates a Good Effect) I'll take that as a +5 stack.

Carl: Aggravate 61%, and I'll take a Concentration bonus to up it to 74% (Carl rolls a 21. Against Shamrock's Ridiculous defense of 117 this results in failure).

Rasberry: (looking flustered) This is going to take all day. I jump across to show just how easy it is. (She peruses the leaping rules) But I'm also going to make a fast walk up to the lip, at 5 spm this will compensate for the step I need.

Director: (checking his memory) ¼ step for every step travelled.Okay. Rasberry, give me either a muscle or reflex check.

Rasberry: Reflexes at 85% (she rolls a 90) Oops! I think I'll use an Irish Luck point on that and reroll it (Rasberry strikes off a point of Irish Luck. This time she rolls a 30.)

Director: Against the jump's strength of 20 you create an Average Effect, although the rock crumbles a bit beneath your feet, you land on the ledge and step clear, no problem.

Joe: I also make a fast walk to the edge and make a Reflex check. (With Joe's reflex score of 100, there's no way he could fail, still he does need to roll and comes up with a 22.)

Director: Side effect! A die roll of 22 equates to a Little Effect. "Character is left hanging on by one hand and will fall if not helped up" The Side effect however is a good one. Rasberry saw the surprised look on your face as you stumbled through the air and dove to catch your other hand. She easily pulls you up.

Rasberry: (with a smile) Yeah, that's it! That's exactly what I did.

Director: Now everyone make an intuition check.

Everyone: Why?

Director: Just do it already.

Shamrock: You know we're all going to take a concentration bonus for this.

Director: Fine, but burn five points of Fort.

Carl: Intu of 40%, +13 of concentration, brings it up to 53%. (He rolls a 02) Yahoo! What'd I notice.

Shamrock: Intu of 75%, +18 of concentration, brings it up to 93%. (She rolls a 43).

Joe: Intu of 75%, +15 of concentration, brings it up to 90%. (He rolls a 42).

Rasberry: Intu of 80%, +17 of concentration, brings it up to 97%. (She rolls a 32).

Everyone: So what'd we notice?

Director: A whole bunch of orcs hiding in carved out murder holes in the walls, hidden by cave moss. There are twelve to be exact. An orc commander and five orc guards on Carl's side. Two orc guards and four orc peons on Shamrock's side. They were just waiting for the party to split up, and now they're going to push you back into the chasm.

Joe: Or foolishly try.

Director: First they open fire with bricks and crossbows. The good thing is that the cave is large enough to put them at short range, so they will have to take ranged weapon penalties. The bad side is that you won't be able to make melee combat this round. But you may do so next round.

The Orc Commander fires his heavy crossbow at Carl, BCH 66% (He rolls a 43. Minus 2 for range creates a die strength of 41. Against Carl's Total Defense of 102 this creates a Little effect). Carl you feel a sharp pain in your back and take 10 points of Vit and 1 wound. Two other guards shoot at you with their light crossbows, BCH 56% (He rolls 58 and 80 both miss). Against Shamrock three light crossbows at BCH 56% (He rolls 59, 91, 53. The last roll hits, takes a -2 for range and strikes with a die strength of 52. Against Shamrock's Total Defense of 108 this creates a Little effect). Shamrock, two bolts come close and a third grazes your stomach doing 10 Vit and 1 wound.

On the other side of the pit, Rasberry is shot at by two light crossbows, BCH 56% (He rolls 35 and 25. They take a -2 for range. Against Rasberry's Total Defense of 62 this amounts to two good effects) 40 Vit and 4 wounds.

Rasberry: Youch! They're going to pay for that. I mark them off as lucky misses (This technically means nothing, wounds are wounds, but at least she doesn't have to walk around with arrows sticking out of her.).

Director: Joe, you are being targetted by four brick throwing Peons, BCH 73% (He rolls 62, 89, 38, 26. Three hits, but bricks have a terrible range and take a -10. Against Joe's Total Defense of 91 this amounts to a Good, a Little, and a Failing Effect.) 10 points of Vit. (Joe shrugs and marks it down) Okay, next round.

Carl: I jump on the Orc Commander with a Thunderstrike. Speed of 8.

Director: He drops his crossbow and unsheathes his bastard sword. And he's going to thunderstrike you, although you'll definitely hit first.

Carl: BCH 134% (Carl rolls 17.) I'm going to use an Irish Luck point on that and roll again. (Carl rolls a 62. Plus an excess bonus of 34 this creates a die strength of 96. Against the commander's total defense of 100 this creates a Side Effect. Since the original die roll was 62 the side effects table says an intense effect has been struck.) 86 Vit and 8 wounds.

Director: Wham! You caught him completely by surprise, knocked him off his feet, and now he is unconscious on the floor. The two other orcs around you -however- are not. They attack you with swords, BCH 66% (Director rolls 12, 26. Against Carl's defense of 102 this makes for two failures) Both hit but harmlessly bounce off your platemail. They are aghast at how easily you felled their mighty commander. Shamrock?

Shamrock: I cast Misdirection on myself. It's instantaneous, BCH of 61%, and costs 3 fort per moment. (She rolls a 55 and marks 3 fort from her sheet) Yipee! My defense is now 163

Director: Okay, three orc guards attack your significantly more slippery self than usual. Long swords with a BCH of 66% (He rolls 66, 51, 83) Since the best they can possibly do is a 66 – which results in a failure against your defense of 163 – they automatically fail.

On the other side of the gorge. Rasberry?

Rasberry: First I use my Resolve, pop a wound and repair 13 points of Vit (no dice are rolled to work the talent Resolve so this does not count as her action). And since I'm totally PO'd, I use my thunderstrike to make multiple attacks, one against each of the orcs with the crossbows. My speed is 11.

Director: Their swords have a speed of 3 you strike first.

Rasberry: Good. (Rasberry takes her massive 168% BCH and splits it in half, then rolls the dice twice trying to get equal or under 84%. She rolls 39 and 2. Against the guard's defense of 81 this results in a Little and a Failure. If she had just stuck with one massive attack the 39 would have turned into an intense effect) Drat! One of them takes 15 Vit and 1 wound.

Director: They attack you with their swords, BCH 66% (He rolls 92 and 97 both miss).

Joe: Against the four peons? I do a Crane Strike on just one of them.

Shamrock: What's a crane strike?

Joe: It's where you swing your sword up over your head and stab it forward. It's harder to hit with but does an extra effect of damage. BCH 99% (Joe rolls a 74. Against the peon's defense of 73 this creates a Side Effect. The original roll of 74 means an Intense Effect which is upped by the crane strike to a Terrific Effect) 80 Vit and 8 wounds of damage.

Director: Since it's a side effect, the peon's sword goes spinning through the air, but this doesn't matter much since you knocked him flat. He had some lucky misses, so he's not dead, but he is going to be out for a while. Still, the other peons look at you and shout, "Oh my God. You killed Kenny!" Then jump on you with their short swords. BCH 63% (He rolls 35, 30, 80 against Joe's Def of 91 this amounts to two little effects) 10 Vit of damage.

Round 3?

Carl: Okay, no more monkeying around. I take an exertion bonus and use my thunderstrike against one orc guard. BCH 151%

Director: Mark 5 Vit.

Carl: Heh. Heh. Heh. (He takes off 5 vit and rolls the dice. 54. Plus an excess bonus of 51 this brings the die strength up to 105. Against the orc's defense of 81 this creates an Intense effect) 86 vit and 8 wounds.

Director: Thwap. He's unconscious. The other guard, panicing, uses an exertion bonus of +10 to his sword attack. BCH 76% (The director takes off 5 Vit and rolls the dice. 83 – a miss).

Shamrock: I still have misdirection going (takes off 3 Fort since the spell works moment by moment). I'm going to make simultaneous attacks. A sword swing against one orc and a kick against another.

First the sword, BCH 121%. (She rolls a 77. It takes an excess bonus of +21, and a +10 magical bonus, but also a simultaneous action penalty of -15, resulting in a die strength of 93. Against the orc Def of 81 this becomes an average effect) 30 Vit and 3 wounds.

Now the kick, BCH 102% (She rolls a 71. It takes an excess bonus of +2 and a simultaneous action penalty of -15, resulting in a die strength of 58. Against the orc Def of 81 this becomes an good effect) 30 Vit and 1 wound.

Director: Seeing as they need die strengths in the 90's to hit you, I'm only going to roll to see if they get snake eyes. (52, 9, 56) nope.

Rasberry: I'm going to do a normal attack and hold one parry in reserve. BCH 138% (She rolls an 85. Plus an excess bonus of 38 and minus a parry modifier of 20 equals a die strength of 103. Verses the orc defense of 81 this creates an Intense effect) 80 vit and 8 wounds.

Director: Yow! What's your attack speed?

Rasberry: 11.

Director: His is 3 so there's no chance of him retaliating. The other attacks. BCH 66%. (Director rolls a 32)

Rasberry: Minus my parry of -23 this makes for a 9, aka a Little effect against my defense of 62.

Director: Right. Take 10 vit and 1 wound. Joe?

Joe: I'm going to do what Shamrock did with a sword swing and a kick. First the swing (BCH 114%. Die Roll 61. Modified Die Strength 60. Effect: Average). Now the kick (BCH 127%. Die Roll 24. Modified Die Strength 36. Effect: Good). Altogether that makes for 68 points of damage and 4 wounds.

Director: Another Peon bites the dust. The other two retaliate as best they can, including exertion bonuses (BCH 73% Die Rolls: 89 and 93. Both are failures.) Round 4?

Carl: Thunderstrike. (BCH 134%. Die Roll 68. Modified Die Strength 82. Effect: Average.) 54 Vit and 5 wounds.

Director: That reduces your last guy to 1 point of Vitality. He falls down and pretends to be dead.

Shamrock: (She strikes off another 3 fort for her spell) I'm going to try something I've always wanted to do, a Trebuchet against the one remaining untouched orc. BCH 69% and an exertion bonus of +17. BCH 86%. And I'm going to risk roll it. (Shamrock picks out a bunch four siders and makes three separate throws: 8, 14, and 21. All of which adds up to 43. It's odd so this number is a bonus not a penalty. When added to the starting point of 43 it equals 86! Quite possibly the most perfect roll ever made! The Defense is the orc's weight minus Shamrock's weight, 180 -96 = 84. On the effects table the two collide to create a Side Effect. With a die strength of 86 it equates to a Terrific Effect) 105 Vit and 5 wounds.

Director: Wow! According to the trebuchet lgaite he is "Thrown 4 steps forwards. Unable to do anything but crawl until a Current Vit check is made."

Carl: Can someone tell me what just happened. What's a Trebuchet?

Director: Out of the corner of your eye, you just saw Shamrock leap up onto the orc's shoulders, do a back flip, and fling this hapless beast four steps through the air and into the gaping maw of the abyss. He died simultaneously screaming and smiling.

However, since it was a side effect, I'll say that – as awesome as this was – it also allowed the other orcs you were fighting to turn and run as fast as they could into the cave you came in by. Even Carl is too stunned to stop them.

Rasberry: Those two guards are going to bring dozens of guards back with them. I use my thunderstrike to get rid of this last guard. (BCH 168 %. Die Roll 93. Modified Die Strength 161. Effect: Excellent.) 160 Vit and 16 wounds.

Director: Damn! He throws his sword up to stop you, but you cleave through him like a side of bacon, and he falls over into two pieces. The two remaining peons fighting Joe turn and bolt. Joe you still get to attack and against their Surprise Defense, but they'll be gone next round.

Joe: I do a simultaneous sword strike and a monkey roll.

Director: I'll allow it providing you drop your sword for the monkey roll.

Joe: Sure. First the sword (BCH 114 %. Die Roll 70. Modified Die Strength 69. Orc's Surprise Defense: 56 Effect: Average.) 30 vit and 3 wounds. And now the monkey roll, basically a trebuchet but safer, (BCH 119%. Die Roll 77. Modified Die Strength 81. Orc's Surprise Defense: 56 Effect: Intense.) 84 Vit and 4 wounds.

Director: Well, it's not quite as impressive as Shamrock's manuever, but Joe grabs this running orc by his armor, drops onto his butt, and uses both leverage and a kick to vault the orc over his head and screaming into the abyss. The encounter is over and none too shabby either. If you hadn't knocked out that commander so quickly it would have been harder. Carl, would you like to try jumping over the pit?

Carl: I don't know. I assume that the peon escaped into the passageway leading away from the cave. From which direction will the next wave of guards come? Maybe we should go back the way we came in.

Shamrock: Not this again.

Rasberry: Carl, you are such a pansy!

Director: Well, one thing is certain. You hear footsteps and the beating of war drums. But from what direction you really cannot tell.

TABLES & STUFF

BASIC COMBAT CHEAT SHEET

MISSILE RANGE

Range	Point Blank	Short	Medium	Long	Football Field
r.25	0	-20	-60	-120	-240
r.50	0	-10	-30	-60	-120
r.75	0	-7	-23	-45	-90
r1	0	-5	-15	-30	-60
r2	0	-2	-8	-15	-30
r3	0	-2	-5	-10	-20
r4	0	-1	-3	-8	-15
r5	0	0	-3	-6	-12
r6	0	0	-2	-5	-10

DAMAGE TYPE & WOUNDS

Damage Type	Abbv.	Damage Done
Impact	Ip	1 wound per 30 points
Blunt	Bt	1 wound per 20 points
Mixed	Mx	1 wound per 15 points
Sharp	Sp	1 wound per 10 points
Laser	Ls	1 wound per 5 points
Fire	Fi	*Blunt damage*, and if on fire then **1/2** the original damage every moment until flames are put out.
Cold	Co	*Impact damage*, and **1/4** the original damage every moment from hypothermia.
Acid	Ac	Acid (Mx 2). The abbreviation indicates the damage, and the number is how many moments until it dilutes down to the next level

MISC NOTES & MODIFIERS

Initiative
Caught by Surprise: -10 Spd
Exertion Bonus: +1 Spd for every +5 Bonus
Sheathed Weapon: -20 Spd
Parting Shot: 3 points speed difference.

Range
Melee: On 1st strike the longest weapon hits first.
Ranged: Distance modifies die strength.

Offense
Exertion costs 5 Vit to use
Unfamiliar Weaponry uses the General Attack BCH
Multiple Attacks: simply split your BCH as needed.
Simultaneous Attacks: -15 per extra attack. Uses the slowest weapon speed.

Defense
Armor Damage: Armor can take up to half an attack's wear damage to its defense strength.
Total Defense is normal defense.
Grab Defense is for attacks which simply want to hit a target.
Surprise Defense is ones Armor, Helm, and RDF it is for surprise attacks.
Prone Defense is Armor and Helm. It is for when the defender is oblivious to the attack.

Extras
Charging: No parries. +3 per 2 SPM. Target and attacker make Reflex reaction check to remain standing; +1 is gained for every pound one weighs more than ones opponent.
Explosions: starts with a die strength of 80, loses 20 for every # of steps which fall between point of detonation and target equal to its e-range.
Knocked Down: most characters knocked down must waste a moment making a Ref check to get back up. Defends with Surprise Defense while doing so.
Grapples: to break free of a grapple, one must make a Mus or Ref check which is greater than the one which set it. Both characters use Prone Defense against other attackers.
Parrying: causes a -20 penalty and gives an attacker the attack's PAR as its penalty.

BATTLE BOARD CHEAT SHEET

MISSILE RANGE

Range	Modifier
r.25	-4 per step
r.50	-2 per step
r.75	-1.5 per step
r1	-1 per step
r2	-1 per 2 steps
r3	-1 per 3 steps
r4	-1 per 4 steps
r5	-1 per 5 steps
r6	-1 per 6 steps

OFFENSIVE MOVEMENT

Kind of Movement	Modifier
Walk	0
Run	-20
Sprint	-40
Swim	-20
Jump	-25
Climb	-20
Glide	0
Fly	-10
Dig	-40
Falling	-45
Sinking	-15

(Modifiers for exotic movement do not apply if this is the creature's basic form of movement.)

SPEED-O-METER

SPM	MOD	1	2	3	4	5
1	0	x	x	1	x	x
2	0	x	1	x	1	x
3	0	1	x	1	x	1
4	0	1	x	1	1	1
5	-5	1	1	1	1	1
6	-5	1	1	2	1	1
7	-5	1	2	1	2	1
8	-5	2	1	2	1	2
9	-10	2	1	2	2	2
10	-10	2	2	2	2	2
11	-10	2	2	3	2	2
12	-10	2	3	2	3	2
13	-15	3	2	3	2	3
14	-15	3	2	3	3	3
15	-15	3	3	3	3	3
16	-15	3	3	4	3	3
17	-20	3	4	3	4	3
18	-20	4	3	4	3	4
19	-20	4	3	4	4	4
20	-20	4	4	4	4	4
21	-25	4	4	5	4	4
22	-25	4	5	4	5	4
23	-25	5	4	5	4	5
24	-25	5	4	5	5	5
25	-30	5	5	5	5	5

(Note: Mod applies to those trying to hit the moving target)

PHYSICAL COMBAT SIDE EFFECTS

UNMODIFIED DIE ROLL	EFFECT CREATED	SIDE EFFECT	DESCRIPTION
01-10	Failure	Juggler what Juggler?	Attacker, make a Durability check or Die!
11-20	Little	Not so Funny Bone.	Attacking character takes half of the inflicted damage.
21-30	Good	Break Weapon.	Swords and stone floors don't mix. Attacker must make a weapons check or hopelessly destroy the weapon being used (does not count as an action).
31-40	Good	Lose Weapon.	Shouldn't have oiled the leather on that hilt this morning. Attacker must make a Reflexes check or have weapon flung 1- 10 steps away.
41-50	Average	Shock Self	Attacker makes a Durability check or suffers a head ringing concussion and spends the next 1 to 5 moments wandering about in shock, unable to do anything but use a shield and parry attacks.
51-60	Average	Shock Opponent	Defender makes a Durability check or suffers a head ringing concussion and spends the next 1 to 5 moments wandering about in shock, unable to do anything but use a shield and parry attacks.
61-70	Intense	Flipped off the Feet	Defender makes a Reflex check or falls down, losing any chance of counter attack for that moment and spending the next moment standing up.
71-80	Intense	Disarm	Defender makes a Reflex check or watches the disheartening slow-mo flight of ones weapon 1 - 10 steps across the room.
81-90	Terrific	Knock-Out	Defender makes a check of Current Vit or is knocked inexplicably unconscious for 3-30 moments.
91-99	Excellent	Break Limb	Defender makes a Durability check or lose the use of one limb at random for a couple of months. Penalty for massive trauma depends on one director.
00	Excellent	Instant Death	Defender, make a Durability check or Die!

SOCIAL COMBAT CHEAT SHEET

SLAM, STACK & DISS

Failure	-5
Little	0
Good	+5
Average	+10
Intense	+15
Terrific	+20
Excellent	Success!

SUGGESTION LOYALTY

Level Of Possibility	Loyalty to a Scored Suggestion	Metaphorically
Possible	Followed but with major word play and a bail out Fort check is allowed.	Lying Snake.
Impossible	Commited but with major word play allowed.	Leprechaun
Ridiculous	Commited but with minor word play allowed.	Djinni.
Out of the Question	Suggestion will be performed without question or deception.	Old Yeller.
Adsurb!	Absolute loyalty to committing the suggestion.	Brainwashed cult member.

MISC NOTES & MODIFIERS

Conversation Begins

Suggestions are made.

Defenders against them state their level of possibility

Initiative & Range

Mint is used to see who goes first.

Social combat has no sense of range.

Offense

A successful hit slams stacks or disses, all use the table to the right.

Slam is Mixed Fortitude damage.

Stack accumulates a bonus in ones favor.

Diss puts this bonus as a penalty against an opponent.

Failure always puts a -5 on a speaker.

Extras

Bailing Out: 1 check of current Fort away from the victor to simply drop the suggestion.

Deprogramming: It can be done if someone can end a social combat bout with a greater die strength than the one which planted the current suggestion.

Working a Crowd: Social Combat can be used against any number of people. If no one steps forward from the crowd then the most average character represents everyone.

Conversation Ends

It ends as soon as an **Excellent Effect** is scored.

The loser must **Cease & Desist** Combat and immediately set about carrying out the suggestion.

SOCIAL COMBAT SIDE EFFECTS

UNMODIFIED DIE ROLL	EFFECT CREATED	SIDE EFFECT	DESCRIPTION
01-10	Failure	Bump Down Possibility.	Attacker moves the level of possibility most closely associated with the Defender one step closer to Possible, or loses the conversation if already at Possible.
11-20	Little	Lose Face.	An off color comment causes the attacker to lose all stacking bonus.
21-30	Good	Flabbergast!	*Why I Never!* Attacker makes a Charisma check or the current social combat attack is rendered useless for the rest of the conversation.
31-40	Good	Stutter.	An Intuition check is made or the next social combat attack is forfeited to a loss for words.
41-50	Average	Shock Self.	Attacker forfeits the next 1-2 attacks.
51-60	Average	Shock Opponent.	Defender forfeits the next 1-2 attacks.
61-70	Intense	Connect.	The Attacker making so much sense a +2 speed bonus is gained for the rest of the conversation.
71-80	Intense	Disarm	Defender must make a Charisma check or be unable to use his or her current social combat skill for the rest of the conversation.
81-90	Terrific	Snap!	Ow! If Slamming an opponent the Defender takes double damage.
91-99	Excellent	Gain Face.	Defender accidentally drops all stacking bonus.
00	Excellent	You Must Be my Bagwhan!	Defender makes a Current Fort check or loses the Conversation.